

AMERICAN FILM



Journal of the
Film and
Television Arts

October 1976

\$1.75

ALEX HALEY'S ROOTS
An Epic for Television

THE WESTERN MYTH
Two Views:
Larry McMurtry
Frank Getlein

MAKING IT IN FILM

Julia Phillips

As co-producer of "The Sting," you've become one of the best-known young producers in the business. Was that your first film?

No. My first was "Steelyard Blues." I produced it with Michael Phillips and Tony Bill. Sometimes I wish the order had been reversed, then maybe "Steelyard" might have been more successful. But we learned a lot from it, and, like a first child, it will always be one of my favorites.

How do you define the producer's role?

Here's how I usually describe it: the producer is there long before the shooting starts and way after the shooting stops. Michael and I are involved with every phase of the production. From developing screenplays to casting, shooting, and editing. On our latest pictures, we have some of the top bright young writers, directors, and performers. It's great to work with our contemporaries because we develop a very creative relationship. I think that's one of the reasons they like working with us.

In this business you never stop learning. We're now producers on an extraordinary picture that's going to have more than fifty-five minutes of special effects. So I'm learning a lot more about the technical aspects of film. And it's nice to know you can always call a Kodak representative when you have any questions about Eastman film and what it can do for you.

It sounds like it's an advan-



tage to have two people as producers.

Absolutely. Even with the two of us, I sometimes feel we need to be cloned, for those moments when we're supposed to be in four places at once.

What are some of your current projects?

We've just produced "Taxi Driver." A very dark movie, filled with sex and violence—but without one dirty frame in it. We're also executive producers on "The Big Bus" and producers on "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," directed by Steven Spielberg.

As a producer soon to become a director, how do you

feel about the prevailing attitude that women lack the stamina to direct?

Well, as a director you become a focal point, and if you look tired, your crew will feel tired. But I'm not worried about stamina. I've found that women like Marcia Lucas and myself generate more energy than anyone else on a set. And as a producer, I had to build up twice as much creative energy because half of it was drained just getting a picture off the ground. Take "Taxi Driver": it took four years, from the time we optioned the screenplay, to get the financing and other details worked out, before one frame of film was exposed.

It has to be in your blood because three times a day you ask yourself why you are doing this. Especially when you've done it before and you know up front it's going to be pure torture. But if you love the screenplay, and the director and cast amplify it, then it's magic—and the rewards are fantastic.



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The American Film Institute is an independent, non-profit
organization serving the public interest, established in 1967 by
the National Endowment for the Arts to advance the art of film
and television in the United States of America. The Institute
preserves films, operates an advanced conservatory for film-
makers, gives assistance to new American filmmakers through
grants and internships, provides guidance to film teachers and
educators, publishes film books, periodicals and reference
works, supports basic research, and operates a national film
repertory exhibition program.



The Second Year

With this issue, we begin the second year of *American Film: Journal of the Film and Television Arts*.

A year ago, our charter subscribers were the 8,000 members of the American Film Institute. Since then, the institute's membership has grown to more than 25,000. Not only do all members receive the ten yearly issues of the magazine, but 10,000 additional copies reach bookstore and newsstand buyers here and abroad. The tripling of membership in less than a year is one of the most encouraging signs of AFI's growth, and is a healthy life sign for its new magazine—a continuing link between the institute and its followers.

In our premiere issue of *American Film*, we set forth our policy: "to explore all aspects of film and television...to roam the highways and byways of communications...to give thoughtful writers the opportunity to explore the past, present, and the future of the moving picture, its associated art and technology."

The trustees of the institute feel that *American Film* has more than met their original hopes and expectations in terms of the quality, vitality, and variety of its contents and by the membership and readership the magazine has attracted. We had projected a membership goal of 18,000 by July of 1977. That projection has been far exceeded, and every indication is that the growth will continue.

Our objective for the second year of *American Film* is to maintain its vitality and diversity. We were fortunate in the first year, treading into the unknown, to enlist writers the likes of Walter Kerr, Larry McMurtry, Bruce Cook, Molly Haskell, James Baldwin, Jeanine Basinger, John Russell Taylor, David Robinson, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Budd Schulberg. The editors will continue to seek out and invite contributions from thoughtful writers on film and television.

During our first year a much commented upon feature of the magazine has been the special section in each issue, "Dialogue on Film." These Dialogues are based upon the seminars held regularly at the AFI's Center for Advanced Film Studies, and they represent a growing anthology of informed thought on the creative processes and, sometimes, the business aspects of filmmaking. The roster of participants during the year is the best indicator of the range of "Dialogue on Film": David Brown and Richard Zanuck, Robert Wise, Robert Towne, Ingmar Bergman, Elia Kazan, William Wyler, François Truffaut, Jeanne Moreau, Verna Fields, Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond, and Sidney Poitier.

You can be sure that every effort will be made to keep the pages of *American Film* fresh, interesting, and readable. We will continue our effort to serve the broad interest of those who regard film and television as the most important of all the communicative mediums. We want to keep a sharp eye on the possibilities for the future, and to further illuminate the past and present. We want to communicate our own excitement about the mediums we serve and support.

So, as we move into the second year of *American Film*, let me thank you, our readers, for the interest and support you have evidenced for our publication, notably for the letters which have been coming with increasing frequency—criticizing, complimenting, correcting—all of which helps us in our effort to make *American Film* the finest publication of its kind.

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Director, The American Film Institute
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Casablanca Revisited: Three Comments

Unfortunately, there were a couple of errors in the published version of my article ("Finally, the Truth About *Casablanca*," June 1976, *American Film*) that I'd like to correct for the record.

The first is the reference to *Casablanca* as the film in production during the Pearl Harbor weekend. That should have been *Now, Voyager*. The second is the date of the Academy Award ceremony which was incorrectly stated as March 1943, when it was actually in March 1944 that *Casablanca* won its Oscars.

A much more damaging error is a major historical gaffe that unfortunately perpetuates a myth about the film. Based on a misinterpretation of my interview with Julius Epstein, I had mistakenly placed him and his brother Philip in Washington, D.C., with Frank Capra while much of *Casablanca* was in production. This was not the case. They were actually in Burbank during the preproduction phase of the film. During the filming, they were in daily evidence on the sets, working with Curtiz, revamping dialogue, sometimes in collaboration with Howard Koch, and talking to the actors, especially Bogart, who was, as Julius Epstein remarked, "A rock—a true professional. He was very helpful and friendly to us all during the shooting of the film."

The Epsteins had gone to Washington in mid-January 1942, immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, to work with Capra on setting up what later was called the "Why We Fight" series.

This personal wartime commitment to Capra conflicted with the Epsteins' professional desire to do the adaptation of *Everybody Comes to Rick's*, the outline of which had been sent to them in mid-December, and they had liked it immediately. With Hal Wallis's approval, they took the play with them to Washington, where they would rise every morning at six and work on *Everybody Comes to Rick's*. In this way, they completed the first forty pages of what is now known as *Casablanca*, or roughly to the point at which Ilsa and Laszlo first enter Rick's Café Américain.

After two months (during which time they drew no salary from Warners), it became apparent that the Capra unit would take longer to prepare than was anticipated, so they returned to the West Coast in late February

1942. It was at this point that they were sent by Wallis to tell the plot of *Casablanca* to David Selznick. Epstein remembers Selznick not looking up from the plate of soup he was eating while they related the story to him.

Casablanca was not scheduled to go into production until May 1942, by which time the Epsteins had finished the first draft of the script on schedule. It was their completed screenplay that was used as the basis for all preproduction planning. Of course, as was the custom at the time, changes were always being made, rewrites of scenes deemed necessary, then thrown away. Other writers would work on different aspects of the same scene; there was no demarcation line where you can pinpoint exactly which sequence was written by whom and when.

My original intent in writing the piece was to show that ninety-eight percent of the plot of *Casablanca* was based on *Everybody Comes to Rick's*. James Agee, in his review of the film in the February 20, 1943, edition of *The Nation*, referred to the play as "one of the world's worst," a surprising value judgment since, to my knowledge and to that of Murray Burnett and Joan Allison, the original authors, Agee never read or had access to *Everybody Comes to Rick's*.

It was this remark which piqued my curiosity as to just *what was* in the original and how "one of the world's worst plays" was transformed into the best picture of 1943. Howard Koch's book on *Casablanca*, far from clearing this up, just added to the confusion by making no references to the plot, characters, or situations in the original, inferring that the shooting script was made up from whole cloth, utilizing nothing more than atmosphere and ideas from the original source.

The story department at Warner Bros., after diligent searching, finally turned up the original synopsis, which led to Burnett and Allison sending the complete original manuscript along with much valuable background information on the genesis of the play.

Julius Epstein, of course, was extremely cooperative and more than helpful in giving as much information as he could recall about the day-to-day vicissitudes of working on the film. It is a source of great embarrassment to me that an article which supposedly would be the definitive word on *Casablanca* instead reiterates an incorrect and damaging legend—that the Epsteins tried to get out of working on *Casablanca* and supposedly were not even in Hollywood during the making of a film for

which they won the Academy Award.

Hopefully, this will put an end once and for all to that particular myth. I must apologize for this oversight to the readers of *American Film* and to Julius Epstein who very gently and courteously called it to my attention.

Ronald Haver

Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Los Angeles, California

I've been intending to write and say that I've been pleased, by and large, with the magazine. But, of course, one writes letters more often when something seems wrong.

The piece about *Casablanca* raises an issue which may not seem significant, but it is a question of some importance for the field of film study. It is a good subject and some of the questions about the making of a film are well covered—such profiles are to my mind very important contributions to our sense of film history, and they temper the exotic notions of some of our theorists and critics about the "meanings" they find in films.

The trouble with the article is that it makes flat assertions and follows a pattern of assured historical development without any attribution to sources or any apparent doubts about interpretation. The "true" story, indeed! This is not Watergate-style revelation, in which the writer can only hint at his sources. Whom did he talk to? Which assertion comes from which person? Surely, without going to the academic paraphernalia of footnoting, it is possible to say clearly who takes what position on all of this.

Howard Koch, in his introductory essay to the published script, has quite a few things to say about how little help he was given by the Epsteins, and how much he had to do to make the thing work as a script. Now, it may be that Ronald Haver has come very close to the middle ground of truth in this account. But if we don't have the interplay of claims by different sides and some sense of the difficulty of arriving at "the truth," we can't really take very seriously the smooth surface of the "story" in *American Film*.

In presenting it to students, as I shall want to do, I'll have to shrug and say: "This is somebody's version—I don't know whose. Possibly Hal Wallis's, or the Epsteins'. I'm glad we have it, because *Casablanca* is one of the really great popular films, a fine example of almost perfect construction of suspense and character development to achieve an entertainment film with a powerful message. But don't trust this

account: It varies from hard historical fact to press releases and, therefore, it needs another rewrite before we can accept it as definitive. Read it skeptically, realizing how hard it is to get the 'truth' in show business. It's really a superior historical study. A pity that it isn't solidly first-rate."

Richard Dyer MacCann
Iowa City, Iowa

Reading Ronald Haver's article on the making of *Casablanca* brought back memories. In those days I was under contract to Warner Bros. as a writer-director, and it was the practice of Hal Wallis, executive producer, to send around certain properties for a reaction.

One morning, Bob Rossen, who for many years had an office opposite mine in what was then the Writers' Building, came in to ask if I had read an unproduced play, which the studio had recently bought and was now making the rounds, called *Everybody Comes to Rick's*. I told him I had not received it, but asked what he thought of it. He dismissed it as romantic, sentimental junk.

After lunch I returned to my office and found a copy of the play on my desk with a note from Paul Nathan, Wallis's assistant, asking me to read it as soon as possible and send a report to Hal.

Later that afternoon, I took a breather from what I was working on and began to read the piece. I soon found myself getting excited about its picture possibilities. By the time I finished it, I was convinced that it had all the ingredients of a fascinating and successful film. After jotting down a few notes, I rushed up-

stairs to talk to Julie and Phil Epstein, whose script of *Saturday's Children* I had directed and for whom I had enormous admiration. I wanted to persuade them to write the screenplay, since I thought it was the kind of material that they could develop into a great script.

I gave them a brief rundown of the story and explained my enthusiasm: a colorful and exotic background, the kind of atmosphere that made Singapore, Shanghai, and Istanbul intriguing; with an added quality of political refugees desperate for a means of escape; a lonely mysterious American running a sort of nightclub, cynical and disillusioned, suffering from an unhappy love affair, soon to be faced with having to risk his life for the very same woman; a black American friend who played the piano for the customers and sometimes for Rick alone. All of it, I agreed with Rossen, romantic and sentimental junk but *great movie junk*.

The Epsteins thought it sounded promising and expressed a willingness to work on the project except that they were leaving the next day for New York on a four-week vacation. I asked them if I could talk Wallis into letting me go with them and devote some time to preparing a treatment with me. I was sure that the setup was such a solid one that we could return in four weeks with an almost completed script. They suggested I talk to Wallis to see what could be worked out.

A few minutes after six I walked into Hal's office. He was packing his briefcase with scripts, preparing to leave for home. When I told him how I felt about *Rick's* he was surprised, since, as he said, no one had liked it so far. He was even more surprised (but pleased)

when I told him that I had taken the liberty of talking to the Epsteins and had sold them on the idea of doing the script if it met with his approval. (They were choosy in accepting assignments.)

When I asked if I could go to New York with them he turned me down saying that he needed me to do *The Hard Way*. I then asked if and when the screenplay was completed would he give me a crack at directing. He hesitated, saying that it was such a long way off he would have to see how the schedule worked out. That was the end of my association with *Rick's*, soon to become *Casablanca*.

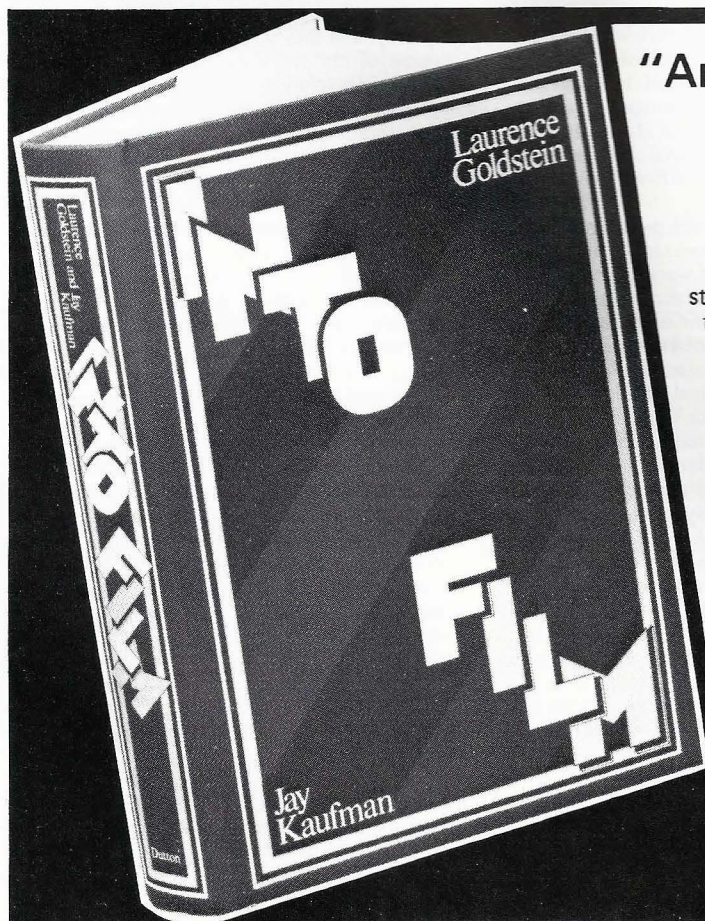
I was hurt when months later the assignment was given to Mike Curtiz, but I could not get angry or take offense since Mike was the top director on the lot and one for whom I had genuine respect. He was, in my opinion, one of the best we've ever had and is still much underrated in these days of auteur preoccupation.

Recently I watched *Casablanca* for the third time on television. And while I can see the wheels turning, the chemistry of Bogart and Bergman still questionable, Rick's dramatic problem somewhat cliché, and the portrait of an embattled underground fighter in a new white starched Panama suit difficult to accept, nevertheless *it all works* because it is still *great movie junk*. And I wish my name were on it.

I take comfort, however, in thinking that I was one of the first to recognize its potential and helped get it started.

I don't know if Wallis will remember this, but I feel sure Julie Epstein will confirm it.

Vincent Sherman
Malibu, California



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Five years in the making, *Into Film* is certain to be recognized as the finest and most comprehensive guide to every aspect of film-making. Through almost 1400 still photographs taken from frames from over 100 films, the authors explore some of the most beautiful, powerful and compelling film sequences ever created—from Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* to the films of such modern masters as Antonioni, Bergman, Ford and Hitchcock. In addition, segments of shorter films—documentaries, experimental films, commercials and student work—have been included, for they provide examples of important techniques and also give the reader the added advantage of checking the authors' explanations against everyday experience. Also included are two 10-second flip sequences—from Eisenstein's *Potemkin* and Godard's *Breathless*.

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The New Republic

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In Scant Supply

As if it were a kind of gold rush, teachers and students continue to flock into film and television education. But working this territory isn't easy. Because film is regarded as a "glamour" subject, it is thought to have more glitter than substance, and consequently is academically underevaluated. The result is a scanty supply of the tools and resources needed for adequate teaching and understanding.

By the latest count, nearly 4,000 teachers, at the college level alone, are dealing with the motion picture arts in their classrooms. Conservative estimates place the total number of students enrolled in a film or television course at 100,000 per semester.

The extent of the expansion has attracted most of the attention of the academic community. Somewhat overlooked has been whether or not this extraordinary expansion genuinely indicates that film is an important field of study.

Recently, the National Endowment for the Arts commissioned the American Film Institute to conduct a survey of the nature and needs of higher education in film and television. In the midst of a vast number of responses from film and television teachers was a comment made by one West Coast film teacher who took a severely negative attitude:

"I am convinced," he said, "that the bulk of film education in this country is a waste of student time and taxpayer money."

A most serious charge. Is it baseless? Is he implying that his teaching methods are the only ones that work? Or is he revealing a sore truth about the state of film education? Let's look at some results of the survey.

Film and television apparently are taught nearly everywhere in the school curriculum; in fact, in not less than ninety-one different departments. Only about six percent of the teachers who answered the survey actually teach in a "film department." Many others teach in English, speech, drama, communications, and art departments. The remainder are scattered throughout disciplines ranging from philosophy to industrial technology. One person teaches his film courses in the police science department.

The heterogeneous nature of film teaching is further underscored by the fact that the teachers themselves come from a variety of backgrounds and interests. They belong to no universally accepted professional film organization, as English teachers, for example, belong to the Modern Language Association. The survey revealed more than one hundred

Comment

small film organizations.

The teachers not only seem to have little sense of the boundaries—if any—of their profession, but there is even a surprising lack of agreement on what ought to be studied. When asked to mention three films or videotapes they most often use in teaching, the respondents contributed a total of 482 titles. Except for *Citizen Kane* which was listed by seventeen percent of the group, and *Potemkin*, which was named by ten percent, no other film was singled out by more than four percent.

The diversity and mottled character of the field must be conceded. Is this where the charge of waste has validity? And is the charge being directed at film education or its flagbearers?

Film and television studies are fairly new additions to the course offerings of many schools. It is easy enough to assume that the teachers of these subjects are relatively inexperienced. The survey indicates that many of the film teachers voice feelings of insecurity and inadequacy.

One teacher in New Jersey complained, through the survey, that he and his courses were treated in a "bastard-child" fashion. Another, in New York state, penned a lonely, "Thanks for listening." And a woman at a small college in Nebraska cried in block letters, "Help!"

On the other hand, nearly two-thirds of the teachers surveyed felt that film and television studies were gaining acceptance, if not total respect, within their schools. About the endeavor of film education itself, there seems to be general confidence.

But about the educators, at least one teacher expressed dismay. He argued, "Most of today's film 'educators' have never earned a red cent as film profession-

als and, therefore, are not doing a decent job of educating." The argument is as unreasonable as insisting that all teachers of the American novel be published novelists themselves. Moreover, the survey results belie the argument. When asked to list fields other than teaching in which they have worked for more than six months, nearly two-thirds of the teachers emphasized professional experience in film or television production.

The survey also shows that nearly half of the teachers responding hold doctoral level degrees, that sixty-five percent have been teaching film or television for more than five years, and that thirty percent have been teaching the subjects for more than ten years.

Where then are the deficiencies in the field? The AFI/NEA survey reveals that teachers and their students are in desperate need of the "stuff" of film and television study: basic reference works, conferences and workshops for faculty development, knowledgeable advising on career potentials, comprehensive textbooks, and, most important of all, films and tapes for classroom use.

Here is where education in the motion picture arts is vulnerable. Film education ultimately can only realize its potential when teachers and students can get their hands on the objects of their study—the movies. Until teachers can offer feature films, excerpted scenes, slides of individual frames, and libraries of important film and television works, there will be reason to worry over charges of waste.

The AFI/NEA survey only confirms the problems and needs many teachers and students in these fields must confront daily. These are only a few of the revelations. But, beyond all of the percentages, this study describes an educational field of tremendous energy passing through a clumsy and sometimes insecure adolescence.

Talented teachers are bringing a variety of knowledge and experience to this profession. They are not beginners. They are not wasters of time or money, and the survey indicates they've had precious little of either. Isn't it time they get what they need to bring their profession to maturity?

Sam L. Grogg, Jr.

A report of the findings of the National Survey of Film and Television Higher Education is available for \$1.00 a copy from the Education Liaison Office, The American Film Institute, J. F. Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C. 20566.

Pencils West: Or, a Theory for the Shoot-'Em-Up

Larry McMurtry

To everything there is a season—so the preacher would have it—and we have now arrived at the season in which the meaning of Westerns can be made clear.

Professor Will Wright, in a book called *Sixguns in Society*, has done for the Western what Lord Raglan did for the Hero in the classic study by that name which he produced in 1936. Wright never mentions Lord Raglan, and he should have, since it was Lord Raglan, not Claude Levi-Strauss or Vladimir Propp, who pioneered the kind of inquiry he is engaged in. I am convinced that *The Hero* makes a better parent for a structural study of the Western than either *The Raw and the Cooked* or Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*; what the former has going for it is a high but not overly subtle intelligence, and a methodology that is less, rather than more, complex than the organization of the subject matter itself.

In saying as much, I don't mean to prejudice readers against Wright's book. *Sixguns in Society* is an excellent book, far and away the most valuable critical effort to concern itself with Westerns. It is good enough, in fact, to be approached with faint misgivings.

Watching Wright's fascinating, but nonetheless merciless, exposure of the structure of Westerns is not unlike having to watch an old friend go under the knife. There is no doubt that the surgery exposes what's really there, but there is some doubt that the old friend will ever be quite as affecting again. In his conclusion, Wright waxes, if not quite messianic, at least extremely optimistic. By understanding the conceptual world of the Western, he thinks we may come to a better understanding of our own social existence, and thus improve our lives. Maybe, but then again, maybe not.

In my most recent novel a lady remarks to her daughter that understanding is overrated, mystery underrated—a view I am strongly inclined to stand behind. Wright knows what happens in Westerns, but does he know what happens to a myth, once it's been under the knife? Does understanding it increase, or diminish, its resonance and power?

The people whose myths Levi-Strauss analyzes will never read the analysis, but I had hardly finished the book before *The Wild Bunch* showed up on television, and I was forced to try and enjoy it in the light of all my new knowledge. The experience was not without its interest, but I am not

McMurtry on the Movies

sure that, as Wright would hope, it made me more rationally aware of the conditions under which I live.

What it did, however, was to suggest to me that in our time the television rerun has replaced the oral tradition, upon which, for so long, the transmission of myth depended. Instead of hearing a favored story once or twice a year at the knee of an elder, one watches it once or twice a year along with a shifting complement of commercials.

Despite three-quarters of a century of fairly intensive scholarship, it seems still impossible to say with precision either what a myth is or what it does. *Sixguns in Society* is as much about myth as it is about movies, and it is almost, if not quite, as technical in its analysis as is Levi-Strauss himself.

No one, any more, is willing to take a commonsense approach to definition for fear of being thought intellectually crude, but Wright, at least, has enough sense to resist Levi-Strauss's theory that the structure of myth derives its consistency from the structure of the human brain itself. If the structure of mythic story parallels the structure of our brains, as Levi-Strauss would have us believe, one would almost have to posit God as storyteller, a sort of divine propagandist who wants his children to have only those stories that are good for them.

Reviewing myth criticism is, frankly, a nerve-racking business, because virtually all contemporary myth criticism and myth theory is so complex as to be beyond summary. Any attempt to describe a theory, if the attempt is less complex than the theory itself, will be reductive and distorting.

I personally was happy for years with Lord Raglan's definition of myth, which is that a myth is a story accompanying a ritual, but this definition has long since been discarded as absurdly simple.

Wright should be congratulated for reminding us that myths are embodied in stories; he suggests, sensibly, that more attention should be paid to the stories, which may in some cases be the myths. Myth, however, remains a more potent word than story, perhaps because it still suggests both the sacred and the heroic, whereas stories are often merely secular, vulgar, and low.

For Wright, myth has, above all, social importance. Westerns, or anything else embodying myth, are for him conceptual responses to the requirements of human action in a social situation. Mythic stories represent a symbolic ordering of these requirements. Societies need myths in order to function with awareness and understanding. Though I am not sure that Wright directly says so, I think he believes that societies generally manage to find the myths they need, the myths that will best reconcile them to their own experience.

This belief, I suspect, is implicit in Wright's criterion of selection, which is box office. The sixty-odd Westerns that he chooses to analyze are the top-grossing Westerns from 1930 to 1972, films that have all earned more than \$4 million in



Illustrations by Ken Rinciari

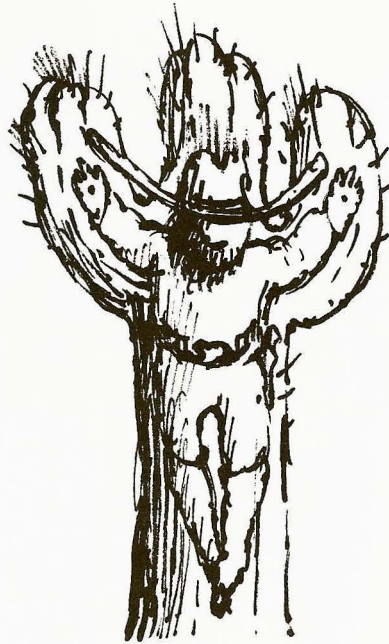
rentals in the United States and Canada. Since these films are the top grossers, it is clear, at least to Wright, that the public accepts them; in analyzing films that have had a wide acceptance, he feels that he gives his study wider validity.

At this point, I find I have problems with his approach. Because these sixty films have had wide acceptance, Wright suggests that they embody myths that are models of social action. He traces and analyzes four distinct narrative stages in the development of the Western, suggesting that changes in the structure of the Western constitute symbolic parallels to changes in American social institutions.

The fly in the ointment, as I see it, is that the sixty top-grossing Westerns of the last forty-five years are by no means the sixty top-grossing films from that stretch of our history. Wright himself points out that by far the most financially successful Western ever made, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, only ranks thirteenth on *Variety's* list of all-time money-makers; the next Western to be ranked, *How the West Was Won*, is a measly twenty-third, and probably only got that high because of Cinerama.

If the potency and relevance of the Western myth is not sufficient to get even one film into the top ten, then how can one argue that Westerns are the myths we most want, need, and accept? If the box office is going to provide Wright with his criterion of selection and ensure his thesis a wide validity, it would seem that he ought to be analyzing the real money-makers. What significance must we then attribute to the structure of *The Godfather*, *The Exorcist*, and *Jaws*?

Moreover, if popularity is going to constitute significance, as it seems to in Wright's study, then what about the TV Western, most particularly "Gunsmoke"? In the twenty years it was running, probably more people saw it than have seen all sixty of Wright's Westerns put together; had it not been widely acceptable it certainly wouldn't have been allowed to continue. One can detect in "Gunsmoke" the four oppositions that Wright finds to be central to the Western myth—these being inside society/outside society, good/bad, strong/weak, and wilderness/civilization—but the alienation from society that is common to almost all heroes of Western movies, of whatever narrative stage, is not observable in Marshal Dillon. Instead, he is the pivot of his



community, the social man par excellence. Perhaps "Gunsmoke" represents an idiosyncratic variation, one that Wright's system can handle; at any rate so popular an embodiment of Western themes deserves, at least, to have some account taken of it.

On the other hand, I would hate to see popularity pushed too far as a criterion of significance. In a culture as polyglot as ours, popularity is no reliable index; powerful, potent, and mythically representative films may fail through bad handling, bad timing, or any of the usual quirks of circumstance. Analysis of an unsuccessful but thematically rich film with a relatively low gross, like *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, might prove just as pertinent as a methodologically identical analysis of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

Wright is to be commended, however, not on the impregnability of his system, but on the quality of his particular analyses. The four narrative stages that he defines are worth describing.

The first is what he calls the "classical plot." In this plot, a hero of exceptional ability enters a social group from the outside. At first, the hero is not completely accepted by the society, but the society is being threatened by villains whose strength exceeds its own. The hero attempts to stay out of this conflict, but is finally drawn into it, and fights the villains. Eventually, the hero defeats the villains, and makes the society safe. The society then accepts the hero, who loses or gives up his special status. Movies of this type include *Cimarron*, *Dodge City*, *San Antonio*, *Yellow Sky*, *Vera Cruz*, *Sasatchewan*, *Shane*, and *Hombre*.

The second stage Wright calls the

"vengeance variation." In the classical plot, the hero enters the fight because of his strength and the society's weakness; in the vengeance variation the hero leaves the society, for the same reasons. The classical hero approves of the values of the society; the vengeance hero abandons the society because of its values. He goes outside the society in order to wreak vengeance on the villains who have hurt it, and returns to it only when he has defeated them. Westerns in this category include *Stagecoach*, *Red River*, *Winchester '73*, *The Man From Laramie*, *The Searchers*, *One-Eyed Jacks*, and *Nevada Smith*.

In the third stage, which Wright calls the "transition theme," the classical plot has been almost reversed. The hero goes from inside the society to outside it. At this stage, the society is stronger than either the hero or the villains, but it refuses to aid the hero in his uneven fight with the villains, so that eventually he must fight against it, too. The woman he loves is unable to reconcile him to the society, and in the end joins him in his separation from it. The three successful films embodying this pattern are *Broken Arrow*, *Johnny Guitar*, and, of course, *High Noon*.

Finally, we come to what Wright calls the "professional plot," easily the dominant plot of the last decade. In this plot, the heroes are professional men who undertake a job against villains who are very strong. The society is particularly ineffective. The heroes, each of whom has special skills, form a group independent of society; as a group they share affection and loyalty. The heroes defeat the villains and in doing so either stay, or die, together. Prominent examples are *Rio Bravo*, *The Professionals*, *The Wild Bunch*, and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

These categories are orderly, well worked out, useful, and convincing, and the particular analyses which accompany them are Empsonian in their clarity and precision. Still, I am not sure that we can allow Wright's claim to having "re-created" the Western, by making it possible for us to see Westerns in a fully conceptualized, socially meaningful way.

I think most of us will probably go on seeing Westerns in the mute, muddled way that we have always seen them. If we walk out better citizens, it will likely be because we have escaped from care into fantasy for a few hours, not because we now realize how capitalistic democracy gradually created the tensions and pressures under which most of us groan.

Nor, finally, am I persuaded that structuralist analysis is the only, or necessarily the best, conceptual vocabulary with which to handle the Western. As I suggested some time ago ("Movie Cowboys,

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OUT OF AFRICA

Alex Haley's *Roots*, a search for black origins, is headed for twelve groundbreaking hours on network television.

The story begins...

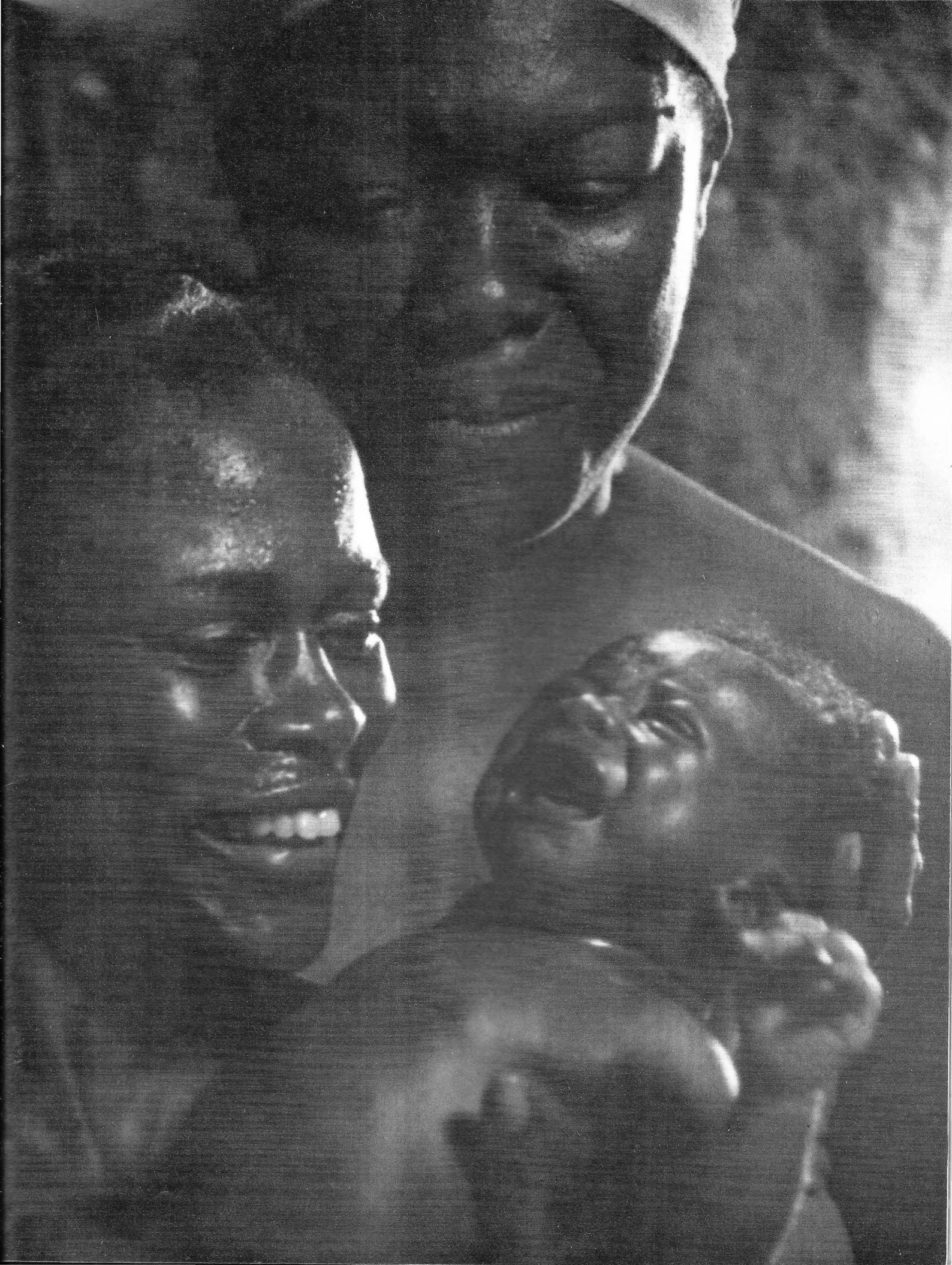
Stephen Zito

In an African village, an old man had said: "We have been told by the forefathers that there are many of us from this place who are in exile in a place called America." These words were spoken to Alex Haley, a black American writer, in the village of Juffure in Gambia. The speaker was an ancient *griot* (or oral historian) who knew by memory, and was to recite that evening, the history of Juffure and of the Kinte family that had lived in that village for centuries. One of the Kinte family, many years before, had been stolen by slavers and taken to the United States.

It was the revelatory evening of his life, Haley remembers, and the culmination of one of the most intriguing and remarkable detective stories of our times. A decade before, Haley had decided to find out everything possible about the origins and history of his family. All he had to go on were his memories of the family stories he had heard as a child in Henning, Tennessee, when he would listen to his grandmother and his aunts talk together on the porch after dinner.

They had told of his great-grandfather, a blacksmith who had been born in slavery and, set free after the Civil War, had traveled by wagon train to Henning; of his grandfather, a hardworking man who had been the first black to own an important business there; and of his father who taught at various agricultural colleges in the South. There were also tales, vaguer and slight, of more distant relatives—slaves who had worked on Virginia and North Carolina plantations in the antebellum South. And there was a treasured family story of the farthest-back person, "The African," who had been captured by white slavers while he was away from his village cutting wood for a

Cicely Tyson and Maya Angelou as the mother and grandmother of Kunta Kinte, the pivotal figure in "Roots."



Edward Asner ("The Mary Tyler Moore Show") plays a slave-ship captain with a conscience. "Roots" has employed a cast of veteran TV actors.



Alex Haley

drum; there were even a few African words that had been passed down from generation to generation.

Alex Haley's difficult search for his roots became an obsession, and he spent twelve years—several of them in debt and plagued by self-doubt—discovering everything he could about the seven American generations of his family. He extensively researched Afro-American life and culture. He read all that he could find on Africa, the history of the slave trade and of slave-ship crossings, and the lives of slaves in America. It was an enlightening period for Haley, a gentle man in his fifties who was then leading a comfortable existence as a free-lance journalist.

"Most people had amorphous ideas about the backgrounds of blacks...including blacks," Haley observes. "When I first got the concept of going back to Africa to try and find my family, it just rocked me to realize that up until that time—and I was a grown man—my whole image of Africa was gathered very largely from Tarzan movies. When I got my research materials together, I realized that I had much more than the story of a family...I had the story of a people."

It is an epic saga that Alex Haley has retold in *Roots*, a 569-page narrative that is being published by Doubleday this month with the largest republication printing—200,000—in the company's history.

Roots begins with the birth of Kunta Kinte in Gambia in 1750. Grown to manhood in freedom and dignity, Kunta is captured by white slavers and brought to America. His foot is cut off during one of several attempts to escape from bondage. He marries a cook on his plantation and has a daughter, Kizzy. She is sold off to another plantation

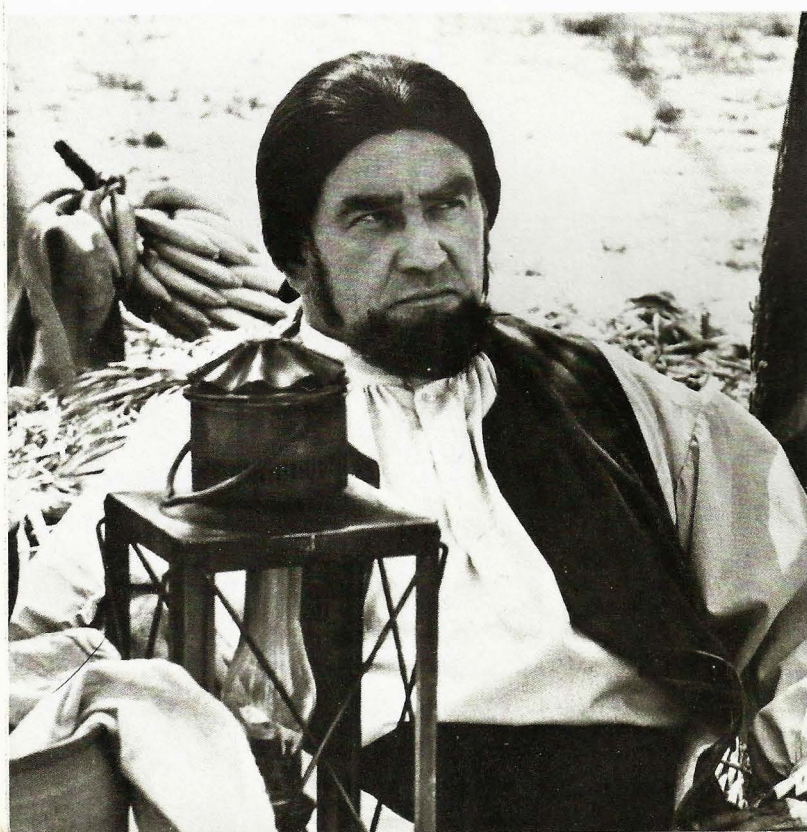
where she is raped by her owner; her mulatto son, Chicken George, becomes one of the premiere cockfighters in the South; and his son, Tom the blacksmith, is freed by the Murray family after Lee surrenders at Appomattox, and he eventually settles in Henning, Tennessee. Other generations are born and die, and the final chapter ends with the recent death of Haley's father. *Roots* is the story of an American family that freely mixes documented fact and fiction based on fact. It is a chronicle of America as told by the losers—by what Haley regards as the American serfs; a story of the large miseries and small joys of black existence in hard times. It is also a narrative of success, of freedom won, of the achievements of the Haley family in this country, of descendants who became lawyers and architects and writers and businessmen and teachers.

Roots was bought by David L. Wolper and is now the basis for one of the most ambitious and expensive productions ever underwritten by a commercial television network. Wolper Productions is currently completing work on a twelve-hour adaptation of Haley's novel that will be telecast by the ABC television network with a premiere in January to be followed by weekly installments. "Roots" is the latest in a series of ABC novels for television that began with the six hours of Leon Uris's "QB VII" and continued last year with the highly successful "Rich Man, Poor Man," twelve hours of highly polished soap opera mystery from the pen of Irwin Shaw. A long-form version of James Michener's *Hawaii* is in the planning stages.

Wolper and ABC are very high on the project and have taken every precaution to safeguard an investment of almost \$6 million. Wolper has employed a fair percentage of the top talent in television: writers William Blinn, Ernest Kinoy, James Lee, M. Charles Cohen; directors David Green, Marvin Chomsky, and John Erman; and the cast reads like a broadcasting who's who. John Amos ("Good Times") plays Kunta Kinte; Edward Asner ("Mary Tyler Moore Show") is the Christian ship captain tormented by his involvement with the slave trade; Ralph Waite ("The Waltons") does a nasty turn as a first mate who uses thumbscrews and black women with equal pleasure; Lorne Green, Vic Morrow, Chuck Connors, John Schuck, and Robert Reed (all TV veterans) are white slave owners or overseers.

Cicely Tyson is Kunta's mother; Thalmus Rasulala, his father. Lou Gossett is Fiddler, the ebullient slave musician and cynic who is Kunta's only real friend. Ben Vereen plays Chicken George, the womanizing cockfighter who sports a black derby and a green scarf; Georg Stanford Brown is Tom Murray, the blacksmith; Madge Sinclair, a lovely, dignified Jamaican actress, is Bell, the big house-cook whom Kunta marries; and Leslie Uggams is her daughter.

LeVar Burton, an unknown "discovered" in a sophomore acting class at the University of Southern California drama school, is the young Kunta Kinte. But famous or



LeVar Burton, as the young Kunta Kinte, is harassed at a slave auction. Burton was "discovered" in a university acting class.

not, performers wanted very badly to be a part of this production. Sandy Duncan, an established TV star who once had a show of her own, approached Wolper for a part in the series and was even willing to test for a small role as the slaveowner's daughter who befriends and then betrays a slave girl. It meant that much to her.

The first three hours of "Roots" were shot on location in and around Savannah, Georgia. The last nine hours are being filmed at the Samuel Goldwyn Studios in Hollywood and at Hunter Ranch in Malibu Canyon. It is on stage seven at Goldwyn that director Marvin Chomsky is shooting hours four, five, and six with John Amos, Lou Gossett, Madge Sinclair, and Robert Reed.

The interior of an antebellum mansion occupies most of one end of the stage, and there are other, smaller sets scattered about that represent the interiors of several slave cabins and a kitchen. It is in one of these smaller sets that John Amos is lying on a prop bed. The air is hot under the arcs, and a makeup man sprays Amos's face and massive naked chest with water to simulate sweat. The Virginia countryside glimpsed outside the window of the jerry-built set is a painted backdrop.

The director Marvin Chomsky gives the command to roll. A group of technicians, black and white, intently watches as Amos does a retake from the previous episode. Kunta Kinte has been captured after an attempt to escape, and cracker slavecatchers have cut off his foot at the arch, crippling him and ending finally his chance to find freedom in the North. Kunta looks away from the bloody cloth covering the stump and agonizingly asks, "What kind of a man do somethin' like dat to 'nother man?" There is no answer to a question like that.

During the scene, Chomsky crouches at the end of the bed just out of the camera's range. He whispers directions and, at one point, unexpectedly grabs Amos's foot and gives it a twist. A flash of pain crosses the actor's face. (Watching dailies later in the screening room, Chomsky will say, "I almost twisted his damn foot off.") Amos blows a line, and Chomsky sharply orders him to keep going. Amos repeats the line, and the scene is over. He is emotionally drained—acting does not come easily to him, but he can be good at it. Pleased with the take, Chomsky gives Amos a hug and congratulates him. Amos goes looking for his bathrobe.

Chomsky is a slight man in his late forties, a proponent of living well casually. He arrives on location in a Mercedes and is dressed in old denims and a yellow T-shirt with a picture on it of the "Texas Opry House." He is a TV veteran. He began as a set designer in the days of live drama on CBS in the fifties and later became a director. Like several others of his TV generation, he alternates between quality TV programs, made-for-television movies (*Mrs. Sundance*, *Little Ladies of the Night*), and modest feature films (*The Bubble*, *Evel Knievel*, and *MacKintosh and T.J.*, a recent Western starring Roy Rogers on the

comeback trail). Chomsky is low-keyed and effective on the set and is surprisingly philosophical and calm in the midst of chaos, settling for the best he can get under the circumstances.

"Everything is a compromise," he says evenly. "I do the best I can in the time I have. Television is like a cauldron, a forge. You try for steel and sometimes you end up with gold." Trained as a set designer, Chomsky sets up all his own camera shots. He is not looking for beauty but for truth. "I try to simplify my camera movements, so my crew doesn't screw up," he says. "I set up my shots to preserve the continuity of dramatic relationships between my characters."

It is performance that counts with Marvin Chomsky. Easy and quiet with his actors, he smiles only for them. When John Amos has trouble with his lines, Chomsky is patient, looking away discreetly when Amos blows a take. He is a very physical director and stands close to Amos during rehearsals and between takes, a hand on Amos's shoulder. Chomsky is happy with all his actors. "In television you select actors who can give you what you need," Chomsky explains. "You guide, pull, poke, point out things. But they are not robots, and I am not Svengali."

Amos is a big man (240 pounds) who once played professional football for the Kansas City Chiefs and is a veteran of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." Amos has just quit the cast of the Norman Lear sitcom "Good Times," and "Roots" is a test of his serious dramatic talent and ambition. It has also been something of an ordeal for him. He believes that "Roots" is the most meaningful thing he has ever done; meaningful, but not easy. There are subtle shadings to Kunta's character that elude him, and he is not a quick study. He ruins some takes with small mistakes in line readings, but he always manages at least one good one. Chomsky recognizes that this is a crisis time in Amos's career and is patient and understanding.

"John worked hard to get where he is," Chomsky remarks. "He has so much energy, I can't drain it out of him sometimes. He's very proud, but very cooperative."



John Amos, as the adult Kunta Kinte, urges Beverly Todd, a fellow slave, to escape. Amos left the successful "Good Times" to test his dramatic talent in "Roots."

Looking over at the stolid, unpliable Amos, Chomsky deadpans, "Actually, he's like putty in my hands."

Talk to the other actors on the show, and they will tell you that "Roots" means something special to them, that it is more than just another job. It is a prestige project, and some of these people will be rightfully nervous at Emmy time. Robert Reed, who plays the kindly doctor and Kunta Kinte's second master, is steady and reliable. He keeps to himself on the set and tirelessly reads a newspaper between takes. He is sure of his lines and character, and during rehearsals adds bits of actory business for Chomsky's approval.

Lou Gossett, who is wrapping up his work on the show and is leaving the following week for Bermuda, where he is in the cast of *The Deep*, is turning in one of the finest performances of a career that includes years of work in television and in films like *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Skin Game*, *Travels With My Aunt*, and *The Laughing Policeman*. He is very sure of the character of Fiddler and plays him with broad gestures, funky actor's tricks, and cynical high good humor. Gossett is the perfect foil for the impassive Amos.

"Roots" is particularly meaningful for the black performers. It is the challenge that Amos wanted as an actor, and Gossett remarks that, for one of the few times in his career, he will be billed under his full name, Louis Gossett, Jr. Perhaps Madge Sinclair, who plays Bell, puts it best when she says, "'Roots' is a huge project on which a lot of good black actors get to work, a good showing for black people in the industry. It also means a lot to me that someone thought enough of a black man's life to film it."

The role of Bell is a pleasure for Sinclair. "I'm tickled to death to be working with John Amos and playing his wife," she says. "I've always played all these older, sexless women before, and I have always wanted to play a woman who has feelings of warmth and love. Now at last I get to fall in love with somebody."

Sinclair is a beautiful woman who speaks with a singer's clarity and range. She is tall and dignified, a woman sure of herself and letter-perfect in her work. She has a lovely smile full of teeth, full lips, and almost almond-shaped eyes. Jamaican by birth, she was originally trained for the stage. She performed in the Public Theater in New York for several years and appeared in several of Joseph Papp's workshops and plays—*Ti-Jean and His Brothers*, *The Wedding of Iphigenia*, and *The Mod Donna*. She had a few bit parts in movies that she refuses to mention by name and then received her first significant movie role in *Conrack*. After that she moved to Los Angeles and found parts in *Cornbread*, *Earl and Me*, *Leadbelly*, and *I Will, I Will...for Now*. Between films, she has appeared in several unsold TV pilots.

A thoughtful actress, Sinclair, like many performers from the stage, has some difficulty in adjusting to the tight schedules and unique procedures of making films for television. "They have to shoot it out of sequence and it's hard



on me because I am not used to doing things that way. I'm coming in from left field in every scene; I have no concept of my performance; I don't know what I'm doing most of the time. I just go for it. I make allowances for the variables—the equipment, the other actors. With John Amos, I just hang in there and wait for his good take. I know it will happen. It is a harrowing business. I get myself as prepared as possible and then wait."

The short schedule of "Roots" does not allow for much rehearsal time. Madge Sinclair comes on the set in the morning with her lines down cold. But she does more than recite words. Her Bell, the housecook, is a woman of dignity and strong character, the very opposite of the traditional Hollywood cook and slave. Sinclair admits that at times playing a mammy has made her uncertain and uneasy. As deeply as she is committed to "Roots," Sinclair is disturbed that the blacks who appear in the series, like so many of the blacks who have appeared in American movies since the antebellum fantasies of D. W. Griffith, are still slaves.

"I was among those actresses who fought the stereotypes for blacks and women," Sinclair proudly states. "I wouldn't do prostitutes, didn't want to do mammies. But now I am changing Bell from the stereotype of Mammy in *Gone With the Wind*, because I don't weigh two hundred pounds and I'm not going to eat myself into a frazzle because that's the way somebody sees a mammy." Sinclair then will look you in the eye and say with wry immodesty, "After all, I have two sons, and I'm thin and gorgeous."

It makes you mad that there aren't more good roles for

Lorne Green, who plays a slave owner, and Stan Margulies, producer of "Roots." Margulies has fought to keep the quality of the show high.



women like Madge Sinclair, that she is still walking in the footsteps of Hattie McDaniel. It sometimes makes Sinclair bitter. "Times have not changed all that much," she insists. "Whatever guise you put it under, people want to see the things that they are familiar with. The fact that Alex Haley's book approaches slavery from a historical, documentary viewpoint does not excuse the fact that we are dressed in these slave costumes and still saying 'Yas-suh, Massuh' and 'nigger,' and that little white girl is calling me, 'Mammy Bell, Mammy Bell.'"

Century City is a dark glass and steel phoenix that has risen out of the ashes of what was once the Twentieth Century-Fox back lot. There, in a frigid high rise on the Avenue of the Stars, are located the offices of ABC Television on the West Coast. On a clear day, you can see most of downtown Los Angeles from the forty feet of glass wall along one side of Brandon Stoddard's deliberately impressive office. Stoddard is a short, immaculately dressed man of enormous energy and enthusiasm. He is the ABC vice president for motion pictures for television and limited series, and he was the guiding force behind "Rich Man, Poor Man," one of the greatest successes in television history. The Nielsen ratings were massive, and some nights the show had more than a fifty-percent share of the audience.

Stoddard speaks a little nostalgically about "Rich Man": "It ain't Shakespeare, but it was a very, very successful novel for TV for ABC." And he wants the same success for "Roots." He is not afraid of the critics, for mixed notices did not harm "Rich Man, Poor Man." He is

afraid that viewers may turn the channel for something less demanding.

Stoddard is well aware of the problems that may face "Roots" in terms of public acceptance. He is worried about audience identification and empathy, because the protagonist of "Roots" is not a single man or woman but rather four generations of an American family. And he is also concerned about the reaction of white America to a story that deals candidly, and at length, with black lives and with the savage facts of slavery in America.

"We've never been concerned about reaching a black audience," Stoddard insists. "They'll watch it no matter what happens. The question is, will we reach a white audience, because there never, *never* has been a successful black drama series." Stoddard repeatedly emphasizes in conversation that *Roots* is a story of universal human appeal. "We did not buy *Roots* as a project that would deal with black history," Stoddard states. "It is primarily a story that deals with a family, a very human story. It's brothers and sisters, greed and lust and fear, and all the things that make real drama."

Stoddard knows his audience and that worries him. "We are in a commercial business. When you are plunking down the kind of money we are talking about—which is in excess of \$6 million—we don't want "Roots" mistaken for an educational television venture into the origins of blacks in the U.S."

ABC is doing everything possible to ensure the success of "Roots." It recently prepared a half-hour demonstration reel that was presented at a meeting of ABC affiliates (there is concern about some Southern stations pulling out) and is now being shown to journalists visiting the set. The reel is a curious item. There is a brief introduction spoken by Edward Asner, and Asner, along with Ralph Waite, is very prominently featured in the scenes chosen for the reel. LeVar Burton, the much touted USC drama student who is the key character in the episode from which these scenes were culled, is very little in evidence and has almost no dialogue scenes. Judging solely by this assembly, you might infer that "Roots" is really the story of a white slave-ship captain who is tormented by his licentious first mate and by a Christian conscience.

Alex Haley has seen the ABC reel and is philosophical about it. "I understand exactly what they are doing from the network's point of view," Haley says evenly. "ABC is putting in all possible big white names, which implies it is not a black story but rather a drama. That's smart programming. The important thing is to keep every possible person looking at that first show." Haley, who has a very precise, understated sense of humor that at first goes unnoticed, is a master of the delayed joke. "That reel was put together for presentation to writers and," he adds wryly, "after all, you wouldn't want them thinking that this is a black show."

Brandon Stoddard is also concerned about viewer reaction to violence and suffering, for the dramatic continuity of "Roots" is punctuated by scenes of rape, flogging, and mutilation. There is also an extended sequence on board the slave ship *Lord Ligonier* that is, according to Stoddard, one of the most harrowing moments in the history of TV drama. The claustrophobic hold was re-created in a warehouse in Savannah, Georgia, where a hundred sweating extras were crowded into rough wooden shelves. The

Madge Sinclair and John Amos in the wedding of Kunta Kinte and Bell. Sinclair's dignified Bell is the opposite of the traditional Hollywood black cook.

degree of realism in these scenes was so strong that it overwhelmed some of those working on the show.

"When we asked the actors to get into the slave-ship hold, it was truly traumatic," recalls producer Stan Margulies. "You had sixty blacks manacled hand and foot, and we put slop on them and on the floor. It was dark and messy. There is such a thing as ethnic memory, racial memory. After the first day, ninety percent of the extras were reluctant to come back the second day. Burton, who plays the young Kunta, was wiped out. He was emotionally distraught. He went to his motel and didn't stir because of what it created within."

Stan Margulies is a Hollywood veteran. He was the producer of Wolper features like *Visions of Eight* and *If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium*. More recently, he has worked on several "Movies of the Week" and the TV fact dramas, "I Will Fight No More Forever" and "Collision Course." Margulies has lived with "Roots" for two years and perhaps better than anyone else knows the logistical, political, and artistic problems of putting on twelve hours of entertaining television that will still be true to Haley's vision.

Immediately after the novel was bought by Wolper, Margulies went to work with the white writer, William Blinn (*Brian's Song*) in order to develop the continuity for the twelve hours of the project. Their work provides an intriguing example of collaborative adaptation. They altered Haley's book, sometimes significantly, but it was always with the author's advice and consent. It was, in fact, a condition of the sale of his novel to Wolper that Haley continue through on the project from beginning to end.

Bill Blinn enjoyed working on the show—"It has more merit than a goddamned car chase"—and he found Haley an excellent collaborator. It was, Blinn states, "a mature and adult give-and-take between a writer and the people doing an adaptation of his book. Alex was not coming up with the paranoia of 'what is Hollywood doing to my book.' Alex has sometimes stopped us on the basis of inaccuracy—historical or emotional. But he has been open and giving and helpful and willing to trust people. Let's just say that he has been properly protective of the tone of his work but realistically appreciative of the changes that have been made."

Margulies and Blinn attempted to be true to the novel and to create a dramatic continuity that would balance the demands of truth and audience appeal. "If I were asking you to watch twelve hours of unrelieved horror—nine hours on board a slave ship and three hours watching people getting whipped on a plantation—that would be a bit much," says Margulies. "We are also giving you the joyous moments—getting married, having children, passing on the heritage through the children, the eventual reunion of the family, and the moving on as a free people to a new land."

Margulies has fought to make "Roots" to the highest artistic standard, but there have been times he has been forced to work within the limits of TV drama. He bends to pressure from the ABC Office of Broadcast Standards and Practice and cuts down the number of times the word "nigger" is used in the scripts. ABC has approved some nudity in the African scenes, but Margulies must make sure that no bared female breast is closer to the camera than eighteen feet or larger than a size thirty-two. He accepts the fact that Skidaway Island, off the coast of Georgia near Savannah, must double for Africa. ("How can you do a film about Africa without zebras and alligators?" asks David Green, the director of that segment. "We might just slip them into the film by means of a little sleight of hand.") A movie ranch in Malibu Canyon (where *M*A*S*H* was shot) must serve as a Southern plantation. A small white house has been constructed that will, with a few changes of potted trees and removable picket fences, be used for several different homes. The cabbages in the garden are plastic.

Margulies is philosophical about working in television. "I wish we had the time," he says a little wistfully, "to make it as truly fantastic as it can be made. We are dealing with material that's never been on prime-time television before, and we are dealing with it as authentically and honestly as we know how—not forgetting to make it entertaining. But we must do it on a TV budget and schedule." Margulies, who speaks slowly, carefully picking his words, sometimes drawing them out unnaturally, is a realist. "As David Wolper frequently reminds me," he says, "if we were to win every Emmy for 'Roots,' we would not get a nickel more for having made it. Half my job is restraining my directors from saying that they need more time for a scene. That's ultimately the pain in the heart."

There has been no compromise on hiring the crew for "Roots." The Wolper organization decided at the beginning of the project to hire as many blacks as possible to work on the series, and it is perhaps the blackest crew ever assembled for a network television series. There are eighteen blacks (forty percent of the crew), and many of them are in key positions of responsibility like Joe Wilcot, the director of photography, and Willie Burton, the lead man on an all-black sound crew.

Haley remembers vividly a meeting with Wolper in which the subject of black protest and black hiring came up. "Everybody was suddenly looking at me," he recalls. "My feeling is that *Roots* is an extremely important story to blacks. I said then that I'd like to see blacks given preference in hiring if a particular black is demonstrably good at what he did. As a result we have a crew that is thrilling to watch in operation. Blacks are doing their jobs superbly and everyone says so." There are no black writers on the show, but, Haley remarks, "I didn't care about black writers because I was discussing every script and seeing every draft and revision. I know more about this

story than anybody—black, white, or polka dot.”

Writer Bill Blinn recalls a similar discussion. “When I first came onto this project, I said, ‘Well, this is a landmark in black literature. You have to get a black writer.’ And then Alex said, ‘Let *me* take care of black integrity.’ ” In fact, almost everyone else feels that way about Alex Haley, who is, according to Margulies, “black enough for us all.”

Margulies repeatedly expresses himself satisfied with the crew and regrets not being able to hire more blacks. “Our aim was not to get blacks for the sake of having blacks,” Margulies says, “but it was obviously a project where you wanted a maximum number of blacks. In a couple of cases, we were turned down by blacks to whom we offered jobs because they were making more money doing other things. There was a black art director who said, ‘I’m past doing slave pictures. I’m out doing big expensive white pictures.’ ”

Margulies wanted a black director but it didn’t work out

at first. Gordon Parks, Sr., turned down an offer to direct because he was not accustomed to the murderously short TV schedules (twenty-one days to prepare, shoot, and rough-cut an hour segment), and Michael Schulz, the director of *Cooley High* and *Car Wash*, was too busy with feature film projects to direct even an hour of “Roots.” A black director, Gilbert Moses (*Willie Dynamite*), was eventually signed, however.

Relations on the “Roots” sets have been mostly harmonious. Only once, when David Green was shooting on location in Georgia, was there open conflict between blacks on the crew and a white director. Green is an articulate, sometimes abrasive, slightly eccentric English director who is an alumnus of “Rich Man, Poor Man.”

“At first I felt very self-conscious about being white,” Green recalls. “I realized that this is a black subject and that in another five years it will probably be a black director doing it. But right at this moment it is not considered there are enough black directors with the experience to



“The question is, will we reach a white audience, because there never, never has been a successful black drama series.”

direct within our tight schedule.” According to the actor Thalmus Rasulala, Green had a remarkable rapport with his actors, but not always with his crew. “We did have on the crew one or two black militants,” Green says. “Those are people who see every manifestation of life in political terms. They questioned one or two things I was doing and imputed white motives to it. I really lammed into them: ‘Just get all that black and white shit off your back,’ I said. ‘I’ve come through it, so let’s get together and get past it. It’s just crap. It just hangs on you and slows you down.’ In the end they did, and it was just fine.”

People on the set at Goldwyn speak openly and proudly of the rapport between the black and white members of the crew. It seems that times have changed a little—blacks are slowly being accepted by the unions and are finding work. “Blacks are entering a new phase,” Madge Sinclair states. “This is the second part of the revolution that a lot of people are overlooking. The fires and the arrogance and the violence were warnings. But once you’ve burned, you’ve got to build. This crew was not hired just because they were black but because they were good. They were busy studying at the time the others were burning. And now they are equipped. The doors are open, and we are ready to come in.”

Anyone who has been on the set of “Roots” for more than a few hours has met Alex Haley. It is his custom to come by almost every day and speak with the actors and the crew, unobtrusively watching the saga of his family being filmed. It is, Haley admits, a strange feeling—“For years I sat in a room and all I did was type...type...and now all this. I just can’t get used to it.”

It is clear that he is enjoying to the fullest the celebrity and the money that the novel and the TV series are bringing his way. No longer in hock to the credit card companies, he has bought a house in Los Angeles and is spending his days keeping an eye on the progress of the series and talking with journalists. He is a happy man, and you can’t help thinking that it couldn’t happen to a nicer guy. He did, after all, give up twelve years of his life to this project, enduring both the wrath of his creditors and the jokes of his friends about “this endless book.” It was, in the end, all a matter of faith.

Alex Haley was born in Ithaca, New York, in 1922. He spent the first years of his life in Henning, Tennessee, and they were happy years. “I loved boyhood,” Haley says. “One of my great regrets is I ever got grown, ‘cause I had such a great life as a boy. I had a good family, loving parents. I just had a ball.” Haley always speaks of his family with great feeling and has plans to write a book called “Henning, Tennessee.”

Haley’s family left Henning in 1929, and Haley grew up elsewhere. He dropped out of college to enlist in the Coast Guard during the Second World War. After twenty years

of service, first as a cook and later as a journalist, Haley left the service to continue his career as a free-lance writer, begun while in the Coast Guard. He published a number of sea stories in adventure magazines; he also wrote for *Harper’s*, *The Atlantic*, and the *New York Times Magazine*. And in 1962, his long conversation with jazz trumpeter Miles Davis became the first *Playboy* interview. Haley continued to write interviews for that magazine over the next four years and spent more than a year taping a series of conversations with the black religious leader, Malcolm X, that became *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

In 1964, Haley went to London to tape an interview with Julie Christie. The interview never took place, and Haley decided to see the sights; he went to the British Museum and chanced upon the Rosetta stone. Fascinated, he bought a book about the methods that British archeologists had used to learn the secrets of the ancient hieroglyphics. The stone was symbolic for Haley, and he began to wonder if he could trace his own African heritage.

He began by checking census records at the National Archives and, with the help of linguists who could identify the few African words—including a family name—still remembered by the Haley family, managed to locate the African tribe in Gambia from which his ancestor had been kidnapped.

Haley traveled to the village of Juffure and found a *griot* who knew the genealogies of that village going back centuries. That evening in Africa, Haley had come full circle. The *griot* recited for hours until he came to the fate of the oldest son of Omoro Kinte—“About that time the king’s soldiers came, the eldest of his four sons, Kunta, went away from the village to chop wood...and he was never seen again.” Alex Haley had come home.

For a man who loves to talk, Haley is a good listener and is more than likely to flatter the journalists who come to interview him, telling them, “Oh, I just love writers.” But then, he *does* love writers because he is one himself and has the highest regard for the craft and discipline and profession of writing.

Haley is a wonderful teller of tales. There are few stories as gripping as his rendition of the search for roots. He tells fragments of it during his interviews, and has, for a number of years, made a portion of his living on the college lecture circuit telling the full, all-stops-out, edge-of-the-chair version. He estimates that he has given the lecture a thousand times. Bill Blinn, who accompanied Haley on a lecture tour to a dozen predominantly black colleges in the deep South, speaks of the fervent response to Haley’s chronicle and compares it to a religious experience.

“Haley tailors it to the audience,” Blinn recalls. “White audiences get the same story, but they get more of his gentleness as a human being along with it. I don’t think that’s conscious manipulation but to let them know he’s not out to threaten anyone or put them through an artificial guilt trip. He’s worked his way past all that and is very

impatient with it." Blinn remembers that one of Haley's problems on the tour was that he couldn't keep up with the black students' variety of handshakes—"He'd offer his hand, and instead they'd slap his palm and hit his hip."

Before the filming of each of the major segments of the TV series, Haley has told this story of his search to the new cast and crew—the few African words he learned from his grandmother; the twelve-year search; the remarkable providence that led him to a small village in Gambia. To hear Haley talk is to become a true believer. "The actors feel in awe of the book," Blinn says, "and having Alex say to them that he likes the scripts gives them the freedom to change. All Alex would have to do is walk on the set one day and say, 'It's not what I had in mind but I guess it will do,' and you'd be there till midnight."

Haley enjoys being on the set during production and believes that it has its benefits for him as well as for the show. He is also intrigued by the subtle changes that have been wrought in his characters. "My Fiddler in the book is a cunning character. Lou Gossett has broadened and deepened the character, and I almost prefer Lou's Fiddler. And my Bell is an older, more solid character, an incipient mammy. I find myself falling in love with the actors' characters. There they are. They become real because they are there." And the actors love him. Leaving the set one day he remarked to his companion, "Hey, let's go around the long way so I can get hugs from two or three pretty girls." He wasn't joking.

The night John Amos heard Haley tell the search story the actor was profoundly moved. He embraced Haley afterward and told him that it was a privilege to be acting in the series. John Amos has not lost that sense of dedication, but, as Haley knows, it has been difficult for him. "John had been working on 'Good Times,' and I gather from the other actors that it was not as demanding. I have the feeling that John found himself in something that he hadn't anticipated—the wrenching necessity to go out there and act. Besides, anybody caught between Lou Gossett and Madge Sinclair has got a problem. My friend, the actress Denise Nicholas, just chuckles and says, 'Lou and Madge will put a hurting on you.' John has been in a test of major proportions. He has to wrench himself out of just saying lines and act."

Haley wants to keep close to the action. He genuinely seems to like television work and has moved from San Francisco to Los Angeles in order to be near it. Haley is already talking to Wolper about his participation in a TV documentary based on his next book, which is to be called, not surprisingly, "The Search for Roots." Haley would also like to produce a series for television. He has already spoken to Brandon Stoddard about the development of a series for ABC that would be based on the life of a family. This may seem a little strange for a man who does not own a TV set and watches, by his own estimate, only a few hours a year.

Haley finds television distracting, and he is very intolerant of anything that distracts him from his work. His only regret about his coming celebrity is that the interviews and the travel will keep him from his work. He is a dedicated researcher and a prodigious writer. Much of his conversation is filled with anecdotes culled during the years of his research. As a former sailor, Haley is fond of sea lore, and some of his slave-ship stories are remarkably chilling.

"There was one kind of disease that the crew lived in dread of," he will tell you. "The people who were feeding the slaves would notice that one of the slaves was seemingly unable to see, and the slave would be snatched up and tossed overboard, still alive. But once the disease was noticed, it was too late. It started in the hold and then it would spread to the feeders—and they would go overboard, but it was too late. There were cases where slave ships were discovered foundering in the ocean and every soul on board was blind."

There were times when Haley's research was harrowing and difficult for him. When he reached the part of his story where the African is chained in the black hold, Haley found that he was unable to imagine what it really must have been like and there was nothing in books that would tell him what he needed to know. "I had this haunting feeling then that I wasn't fit to write that section. Just researching in documents wasn't enough qualification." Haley went to Africa and booked passage to the United States on a freighter, *The African Star*. It was then that Haley's research began for real.

"Every evening after dinner," Haley recalls, "I went down into the deep, dark, cavernous hold. It was uncomfortably cold. I had located a rough-hewn timber and, after I took my clothes off to my underwear, I lay on that dunnage and imagined how it would be for Kunta—what he feels, what does it sound like, what is he thinking."

It was a method of research that was not without its hazards, and the psychological toll on Haley was high. Midway through the voyage, Haley did not want to return to the hold. "I felt like I was about to go crazy," Haley said. "I walked out onto the stern and I watched the sunset...I felt terrible. And I looked down at the wake and a quiet thought came into my head—slip under the rail, and all the mess would be over. I wouldn't owe on no more credit cards. No more publishers bothering me. It was the closest to death I have ever come. It was at this point that I began to hear voices—my grandmother, Chicken George, Kunta. They were all saying, No! No! You must go on and write the book."

The experience gave Haley the courage to complete his work. "That night was my catharsis. That was the night I felt I was qualified to write, that I deserved to be writing this chronicle. From that time forward, I never doubted that I was fit. I had strength in the telling."

Alex Haley has a sense of his own destiny. "I feel that I have been chosen," he says. "The American blacks have traditionally been portrayed as the least among the peoples of the earth. Somehow, when from among us comes this thrust into the past, this dignity and pride and heritage and grasp of self, then it is gripping to everyone else."

The twelfth hour of "Roots" that will be aired next year will end with Alex Haley on camera. "I should imagine that it will be a very dramatic moment when a baby is talked of and I come on camera and I say that I was that baby and I heard this story from my grandmother and she drummed it into me and I knew it as indelibly as I knew the biblical parables and then some thirty years later I got curious and went into the National Archives and found documents and that began twelve years of research, half a million miles, three continents...." ★

Stephen Zito is a contributing editor of *American Film*.

THE PRIME-TIME GAME

The new TV season is upon us and it looks upbeat for both viewers and network profits.

James Monaco

Bill Cosby's show is one of several variety programs premiering this season. Cosby's conversations with children are a highlight.

Before going into the television prospects this fall, one thing should be made perfectly clear: The 1975 season was the least successful in memory for prime-time network programs. At mid-season last January, fully one-third of the prime-time schedule had to be reprogrammed. Twenty-two new shows were brought in to bolster dismal ratings. Moreover, some surveys indicated early last winter that overall ratings had dropped as much as five percent. That figure was later revised to a decline of one percent, still a significant change given the increasing number of potential viewers. And finally, the two biggest successes of the season were of little consolation to network programmers: NBC's "Saturday Night" was a non-prime-time show, and "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman" was the show none of the networks wanted.

Yet curiously and significantly, the poor ratings posted by all three networks in the 1975 season eventually had no effect on revenues for the latter part of 1976. In fact, network television has never been in better financial health. Prime ad time for this fall's season was sold out by the end of last June, and at record prices averaging \$90,000 per minute. Since each network has twenty minutes of ad time to sell each broadcast evening, revenue for the three networks averages \$5.4 million per evening. In addition, advertisers, panicked at the thought of being shut out, are buying time far in advance for next year. For the first three quarters of 1977—up to the opening of that year's fall season—

CBS had, by July, already sold more than sixty percent of its time; NBC had orders for seventy percent of its schedule; and ABC—once the perennial also-ran but now rapidly consolidating its position as the ratings leader—reported ad orders for an incredible ninety percent of its schedule.

The old cliché has it that a broadcast license is a license to print money and, indeed, industry figures seem to bear it out. In 1975 the three networks had net revenues of \$1.68 billion and realized profits (before federal taxes) of \$106 million (CBS), \$73.5 million (NBC), and \$29 million (ABC), according to the trade newsletter *Television Digest*. These figures apply to network operations alone and do not include profits from individual stations owned and operated by the networks, as well as other subsidiaries, which, by a conservative estimate, should sweeten the pot by at least another \$50 million.

Why this unprecedented prosperity following hard on the heels of one of the least successful seasons in memory? To put it simply: Network prime time is not the only game in town for advertisers, but it certainly is the main one. There is still a strong relationship between total overall ratings and revenue, of course. Because of its Cinderella success in topping NBC and CBS this past season, ABC will take in, on the average, \$1 million more per week in ad revenues than third-place NBC. Yet NBC, no matter how poorly it does in the coming year, is in no danger of taking a loss. The only questions left to be decided are which of the three





networks' seasons is going to be "quite profitable," which "very profitable," and which "exceedingly profitable." It's what Paul Klein, head of programming for NBC, calls a "win-win" situation.

The reason is structural. The networks play their prime-time ratings game on a limited field. There are only twenty-two hours of prime time in any given week, and no amount of commercial creativity can change the situation. Yet the total number of advertisers vying for that limited space grows each year, while the number of slots remains the same. The result is increased pressure on prime time, and ever higher prices. This year the situation has reached the point where not only will individual shows' ratings fail to have a measurable effect on revenues, but neither will the overall network ratings—not, at least, until the beginning of the 1977 season, a full year later.

At the age of thirty, network television seems to be in an admirable financial position. Ironically, the very factors that have assured its success have also guaranteed stiffer competition in the near future. As prime time is now clearly saturated, ad dollars will flow in increasingly greater amounts into non-network, syndicated, and cable television. A number of TV distribution systems, which until now have only been weak competition for ad dollars, will be able to fatten and grow strong dining on the crumbs that fall from the three networks' groaning table. Increased profitability will draw ever larger amounts of capital investment, further assuring

strong competition from alternative means of TV distribution.

Time, Inc.'s Home Box Office will be joined in 1976-77 by at least two other pay TV organizations. United Artists and Twentieth Century-Fox, annoyed by the low fees HBO has paid for broadcasts of their feature films, have joined forces in "Hollywood Home Theater," which will allow them to distribute their own product directly to local operators of cable TV systems. "Channel 100," another new entry in the field, will use a satellite distribution system to deliver its pay TV programming directly to community antennas, providing a model for future direct satellite broadcasts to home sets. *Variety* calls this "spacecasting"—a long anticipated development which will seriously, and probably successfully, threaten the fifty-year dominance of the radio-television networks since it will open up new channels.

In the meantime, HBO's parent, Time, Inc. has entered into a multimillion-dollar arrangement with Columbia Pictures to finance new films—a deal whose significance will not be lost on other film distributors. Time, Inc. is also getting seriously involved in producing material for network programming, probably with an eye to creating its own cable product.

Down the road a bit, but still certain to have a measurable effect by the end of the decade, are two major technological developments. This past summer, Teleprompter Manhattan began daily use of

"This season, for the first time in twenty years, doctors and lawyers are virtually absent from the network airwaves."

fiber optic transmission. Many TV engineers think fiber optics is the most significant advance in electronics since the transistor. It is bound to have at least as great an effect on the shape of the media. A standard three-quarter-inch coaxial cable of the type now in use can carry a maximum of 40 channels (most carry only 20). A fiber optic cable ninety microns in diameter can carry up to 167 channels. A bundle of six fibers—still less than one-thousandth of an inch in diameter—can transmit more than a thousand channels. Since the fiber optic cables are so small, they can easily be threaded into existing city conduits.

More important—because its effect will be more immediate—is the introduction of the videodisc. Its success is by no means assured, but if the price of the players can be forced below the \$500 level now contemplated and one system becomes the clear standard, network programs will be faced with their first serious challenge from a parallel, competing medium. Luckily for the networks, who are going to have their hands full with the highly sophisticated cable systems of the next ten years, videodiscs won't be competing for ad dollars.



Meanwhile, what about the 1976 season? Financially its effect is going to be delayed until 1978, but aesthetically its impact will be felt immediately. The poor 1975 season has had a beneficial effect, and it now looks as if network television is entering a new five-year period. For the first time since 1970 and the advent of the more sophisticated Mary Tyler Moore and Norman Lear types of comedies, a significantly new kind of show is making its appearance in force. Because they are highly popular entertainment products, TV shows tend to fall into fairly strict genre patterns, much as American movies did in the thirties and forties. Serious serial drama, for instance, is up markedly from last season. The model for this program type, as for Norman Lear's "All in the Family" five years ago, comes to us from British television. The rela-

tive success on PBS of such British serial dramas as "Upstairs, Downstairs" during the past few years has pointed the way toward the renaissance of this kind of show in an American setting. Ironically, last season's "Beacon Hill," the first attempt to import the style, was an unmitigated failure. It didn't manage to translate the style into commercial American terms.

Several months later, however, ABC enjoyed notable success with its miniseries "Rich Man, Poor Man." Like the British series, it followed a large group of characters through a continuing and developing story. This season, for the first time in twenty years, doctors and lawyers are virtually absent from the network airwaves. Family dramas, which numbered six last year, have gone down to three. "The Waltons," the model for these shows, it is interesting to note, shares many of the elements that have made the British style popular, including serialization, the focus on the family, and the historical perspective.

In place of doctors and lawyers, and most private eyes, the 1976 season brings us a continuation of "Rich Man, Poor Man" (based on the Irwin Shaw novel), "Gibbsville" (John O'Hara country), "Executive Suite" (a spin-off of the 1954 film), and "Family" (based on last season's ABC miniseries). "Family" may be the most intriguing. Created by Jay Presson Allen, with film director Mark Rydell as consultant, and produced by Mike Nichols, "Family" simply wants to present an American family of the seventies. An ABC executive, obviously sensing the show is an anomaly, called it "psychological and talky" and promised that future episodes will be "less downbeat" than the original miniseries.

These four shows, together with "The Quest" (a Western advertised as a serious serial drama), offer the dramatic potential for ongoing characters within a continuously developing structure. They also utilize the extended family structure of the British series, but they are open-ended. If they are successful, they will continue to run—and that fact seriously weakens them in terms of dramatic structure. Despite the natural commercial pressures to

What About PBS?

Although the Public Broadcasting System has more affiliates than any of the commercial networks (PBS: 253, CBS: 218, NBC: 217, ABC: 189), several factors conspire to weaken its strength. Many of the PBS outlets are difficult-to-receive UHF stations; a number are strictly educational and don't broadcast general evening programming; and, most important, the Station Program Cooperative system, instituted three years ago, makes it difficult for any one PBS program to reach the total audience. In the

SPC system, the various independent stations in the loose PBS network vote each season on which shows will be produced and broadcast. The highest rated show this year—"Washington Week in Review"—was selected by only 150 of 253 stations. Yet it was selected by thirteen fewer stations than chose "Wall Street Week." PBS's most prestigious import—the original six-part version of Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes From a Marriage*—was selected by only seventy-eight stations.

The old standbys are back: thirteen more episodes of "Monty Python," sixteen episodes concluding the saga of

"Upstairs, Downstairs," a new Peter Whimsey mystery (all imported), and "Nova," "Soundstage," and the other musical and cultural programs which have formed the staple of the PBS domestic diet for the last few years. Aside from "The Age of Uncertainty," John Kenneth Galbraith's attempt to join Kenneth Clark and Jacob Bronowski in the pantheon of public television personalities, the most interesting new show appears to be "The Best of Ernie Kovacs," a collection of rare early footage of one of the sublime masters of television comedy, beginning October 5.

milk a series situation year after year, the networks have become increasingly conscious of the value of closed-end series. NBC has scheduled a collection of miniseries based on popular novels, called "Best-Sellers." ABC, too, has an ambitious schedule of miniseries to be slotted in wherever they fit, including more of "Eleanor and Franklin," six hours of Shakespeare, a five-part series on the origins of the Mafia in Sicily, and a serial based on *How the West Was Won*.

The most ambitious of these is "Roots," based on the investigations of Alex Haley. Twelve episodes of "Roots," to be broadcast early in 1977, trace the development of Haley's own family from the birth of a boy named Kunta Kinte in the village of Juffure in Gambia, West Africa, in 1750, through the years of slavery to the twentieth century. [For a more detailed look at "Roots," see Stephen Zito's article in this issue.] Haley insists he turned down more lucrative film offers because of the breadth provided by the miniseries format. This is precisely the kind of project TV drama does best: Rather than an endless, static series or an individual, one-shot drama, the miniseries gives writers and directors the time to develop complex character relationships, to allow characters to change and grow, even to die, if necessary.

NBC, for its part, is carrying the concept of the miniseries one step further, organizing its 1976 season around "specials" (a form NBC pioneered in the mid-fifties under Pat Weaver), televised novels, and major dramas and films (including *Gone With the Wind* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*). The showcase for many of these one-shot blockbusters is a variable time period set aside on Sunday evenings, crudely labeled "The Big Event." *GWTW* is cannily scheduled for a five-hour, two-part presentation during the November ratings sweep, virtually assuring NBC a strong position early in the season. Also scheduled for November is a four-hour extravaganza celebrating the network's fiftieth anniversary.

A

s for the rest of the network schedule, the more things change, the more they remain the same. Four police shows have been dropped, four added. Private eyes suffer heavy losses—five shows—with only one new program on the schedule. "The Invisible Man" can no longer be seen, but, as luck would have it, "Gemini Man" has the power to make himself invisible. The networks are once again offering ten hours of movies per week. Variety shows, which appeared obsolescent only a few years ago, have come back strong; both Bill Cosby and Dick Van Dyke are trying this format in 1976.

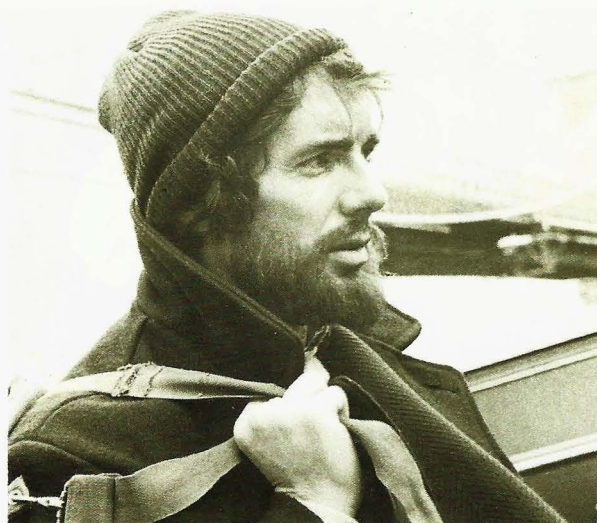
The situation-comedy slice of the pie is slightly larger than it was a year ago. Seven programs have been dropped, but five mid-season replacements have returned and eight new shows have been



Gary Frank and James Broderick in "Family," a continuation of last season's miniseries about a contemporary American family.



Richard Crenna and Bernadette Peters are Washington journalists in Norman Lear's new comedy, "All's Fair."



David Birney as the lead in "Serpico" and Linda Lavin as the heroine in "Alice." Both shows are based on recent popular movies.



added. The two dominant forces in this area for the last five years have been Mary Tyler Moore (MTM Enterprises) and Norman Lear (TAT Communications), who between them produce more than half of the sitcoms on the air. MTM has added one show this season; TAT is up three over a year ago. The most interesting of the newcomers may be Lear's "All's Fair," starring Richard Crenna and Bernadette Peters as a conservative columnist and liberal photographer, respectively, for a Washington newspaper. (Time-Life, meanwhile, is trying to get development money for an hour-long soap opera set in Washington, D.C.—and this may be the beginning of a trend for 1977.)

Women fare slightly better on the 1976 schedule. McMillan is losing his wife; "Kate McShane," "Fay," and "My Mama" are no more; and three family dramas which featured women have moved on to syndication. But "Charlie's Angels," a three-woman private-eye team, has arrived. Laverne and Shirley, Marie Osmond, and the Bionic Woman remain from mid-season and are joined by major women characters in one variety show, one drama, and five sitcoms.

Promising are Warner Bros.' "Alice," based on the film *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, and Jim Bouton's "Ball Four" (based on his own book about his baseball experiences), written by Bouton, and starring him. "Ball Four," one of the few series actually produced by a network, is just about the only entertainment series being shot in New York. CBS, which hopes to do considerably better with "Ball Four" than it did with last season's New York-produced "Beacon Hill," seems intent on reviving the East Coast as a production center. "Kojak," whose supposed locale is New York, actually visits the city for an extended stay this season. Ten hours—nearly half the season—will be shot on location in the Big Apple.

All things considered, the new season offers reason for hope. The three networks are launching twenty-five new series. Add to this eight returning second-season shows, and the result is that half the schedule is composed of relatively fresh material. It's not the amount of new material, but the type which will mean most in aesthetic terms. The shift from doctors, lawyers, and private eyes to more general, less gimmicky, continuing drama suggests that 1976 may mark a turning point.

Yet it must be kept in mind that, from the networks' point of view, the eventual success of a show depends on a number of factors apart from aesthetic quality. Films, books, and records succeed because of some strong appeal (often in combination with more or less ingenious marketing techniques). But TV shows, no matter what their degree of quality or appeal, aren't judged in isolation. They must succeed against the competition and within the tight framework of the prime-time schedule. Many shows have been canceled in spite of a respectable thirty-five percent share of the audience, while other shows with significantly smaller shares run for years.

The intricate techniques of successful programming are unique to the TV medium. In the last few years, network programmers and their subtle art have been drawing increasing attention in the press. No programmers of the 1970s have yet achieved the status of Pat Weaver, James Aubrey, and Mike Dann. Weaver left his stamp on the NBC schedule of the 1950s and, in fact, his influence is still being felt twenty years later. Weaver is the programmer-as-hero of the history books, just as James Aubrey, who ruled over CBS in the mid-sixties, is everybody's programmer-as-villain. Aubrey, remembered for such masterpieces of calculation as "The Beverly Hillbillies," was seemingly untroubled by a restraint such as taste. But more



"The Quest," with Kurt Russell and Tim Matheson as brothers eversearching for their sister, abducted by Indians.

than anyone, he understood the mechanical, impersonal nature of the programming game. Mike Dann, who programmed for CBS after the Aubrey regime, is remembered for his good-natured intelligence.

The players this year are Bud Grant at CBS, Irwin Segelstein and Paul Klein at NBC, and Fred Silverman at ABC. Silverman, obviously the odds-on favorite, thanks to ABC's near-miraculous performance this past season, came to his post a year ago after having programmed CBS's 1975 season. He must have known its flaws better than anyone and that undoubtedly helped him to develop ABC's successful mid-season strategy this past winter. At NBC, Marvin Antonowsky, the latter-day Aubrey, has been ousted after barely a year in office. NBC's third-place showing is said to be the reason, although it could be noted in Antonowsky's defense that Silverman had him surrounded in his respective positions at the other two networks. Antonowsky has been replaced by the team of Segelstein and Klein. The former comes from CBS, the latter returns to the fray after several years as an indepen-

dent consultant. At CBS, Bud Grant has taken over after the five-year Silverman reign.

In sum, any particular TV show succeeds or fails in the ratings game for either or both of the following reasons: its relative position vis-à-vis its competition in the time slot, and its relationship to shows which succeed or follow it. In an average year, sixty percent of the new shows will not survive to return next season. The dextrous programmer, however, can lower this percentage considerably by carefully positioning a new or weak show. Audiences tend to overlap from one show to the next, so that strong lead-ins and lead-outs can have beneficial effects on ratings. When a program has both a strong lead-in and lead-out it is said to be "hammocked." Similarly, relatively weak shows can benefit greatly by being carefully "counterprogrammed" against the two competing networks. If ABC and CBS, for example, have both scheduled police dramas for the same time period, NBC may squeak through to win the time period with an otherwise weak situation comedy, the reason being that ABC and CBS will be competing for the same audience while NBC will have the remainder—people who don't like police shows—all to itself.

With the advent of miniseries, heavy movie schedules, specials, and the practice of yanking weak shows quickly and slotting replacements one after the other until one catches on, programming is not so classically structured as it once was when season schedules were fairly rigid. The programming game goes on continuously now, not just at the start of each season. But we can still make some judgments about the relative strengths of the three networks by examining the fall line-up as it stood some weeks before the season's start:

On Monday, Bud Grant at CBS has performed a classic lead-in maneuver to launch Norman Lear's "All's Fair." Not one, but three popular shows precede it, building audience at each stage. In addition, the new show is counterprogrammed against ABC's football and NBC's movies—notoriously unpredictable opponents—and both those shows have weak new program lead-ins. "All's Fair" is just about the safest bet of the new programs.

On Tuesday, Fred Silverman has tried a similar ploy to aid new sitcoms "Nancy Walker" and "The

"It now looks as if network television is entering a new five-year period."

Who produces network television?

Not the networks any more. Aside from news, sports, and special events, only three prime-time programs are directly produced by the networks which broadcast them: "Ball Four," "Spencer's Pilots," and "Little House on the Prairie." Nearly half the sixty-six hours of prime-time programming aired every week (including films) are supplied by the Hollywood studios.

Universal is by far the largest supplier, responsible for a solid fourteen hours

each week, almost all of it in the action-cop-adventure genres. Warners', Paramount, MGM, and Fox have each lost ground this season over last. Together, they are now supplying only four hours per week. Columbia, in association with independent producer David Gerber, produced four of the more interesting shows ("Police Story," "Police Woman," "The Quest," and "Gibbsville").

The remainder of each week's schedule is supplied by nearly twenty independents, the most important of which are TAT (Norman Lear; eight shows, four hours) and MTM (Mary Tyler Moore; six

shows, three hours). Coming up fast in sitcom competition is James Komack (four shows, two hours) who is responsible for the successful "Chico and the Man" and "Welcome Back, Kotter," as well as new entries "Snip," and "Mr. T and Tina." Old hand Quinn Martin produces three hour-long action shows. Newcomers Aaron Spelling and Leonard Goldberg, who developed an even more frenetic style of action programs several years ago ("SWAT," "Starsky and Hutch") are breaking new ground this year with "Family," produced in association with Mike Nichols.



Jim Bouton clowns with Ben Davidson in "Ball Four," the only current series produced totally in New York.

Tony Randall Show," but his position is considerably weaker because they are two new shows and are programmed against a pair of returning sitcoms. NBC's "Police Woman" should therefore get the benefit of the counterprogramming position.

Wednesday provides a nicely balanced example of counterprogramming, since each network goes for a specific section of the total audience. At ABC, it's action night. NBC obviously hopes to aid the new Western, "The Quest," with a lead-in of the similar and popular "Little House on the Prairie,"

further hoping that the audience for reasonably serious drama that has built up by ten o'clock will lead right into "Gibbsville." CBS, meanwhile, counterprograms traditionally with comedy for two hours. The new programs, "Ball Four" and "Alice," are neatly hammocked. "Ball Four," as we might expect, has been given extraordinarily kind treatment. Why wasn't it given the prized "All's Fair" position on Monday? Very simple: Rhoda, Phyllis, and Maude, three formidable ladies, nevertheless couldn't do very well delivering an audience to a show about baseball. They *will* do well for "All's Fair," a show with a major female character.

Thursday is somewhat unpredictable. NBC appears to have the counterprogramming edge with variety, comedy, and anthology against family and cops. "Welcome Back, Kotter" may take the edge off "The Waltons."

Friday is movie night for ABC and CBS. NBC's eight o'clock sitcoms should do well against the competition. The question is whether or not the new "Serpico" will generate enough interest to stand up against the stronger movies.

Saturday belongs to CBS's powerhouse comedy string, a proven commodity. NBC gets the counterprogramming edge at eight, but it won't be enough. Look for "Rich Man, Poor Man" to eat into Carol Burnett's ratings. The Burnett show, nine years old and the second longest-running program of the entire schedule, should begin to show signs of age.

The first battle on Sunday is between the ancient, fifteen-year-old "World of Disney" and Bill Cosby's variety program directed at children. Cosby should do well. The rest of the evening depends on how many blockbuster "big events" NBC can come up with. The nights *Gone With the Wind* is telecast, ABC and CBS might as well run public affairs programs.

In general, CBS would seem to have the most perceptively programmed schedule. On at least three nights—Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday—its strong sitcom strings should give it the edge. ABC, by comparison, seems haphazardly programmed throughout. By all signs and portents, CBS should be back on top by January. But the general season schedules can be very misleading these days. Both NBC and ABC are going heavily into "event" and miniseries programming, and this might well skewer CBS's apparently strong position.

Whatever happens, one prediction can surely be made: The tight-knit system of three networks, which has prevailed since the birth of television, is eventually doomed. As more channels of distribution are opened up via cable, satellite, fiber optics, and videodiscs, other entertainment conglomerates are going to become much more actively involved in television. The three-cornered monopoly of broadcast television is due to face heavy competition. ■

James Monaco is the author of *The New Wave*, published by Oxford University Press, and *How To Read a Film*.

Festival Report

Berlin

David Robinson

Born To Dance, with Eleanor Powell and James Stewart. A Powell retrospective was one of the Berlin hits.



It was the end and the beginning of an era: The 1976 Berlin International Film Festival was the first of the second quarter century of the event's history, and the last to be directed by Dr. Alfred Bauer, who created it in 1951. Bauer—who is to be succeeded by Wolf Donner, the film critic of *Die Zeit*—has over the years skillfully guided his festival through cold wars, crises, and the year that the jury resigned and halted it in mid-career. He has brought Berlin a long way from its origins as an American-backed, Western-bloc cultural demonstration.

For a long time Berlin simply pretended that Europe east of the German demarcation line did not exist at all. Recent years, however, have seen the Socialist world received into the fold. Even China was represented this year, with an inspirational fable about a simple worker-revolutionary who is made president of a new university and rewarded for his unconventional approach to the job by a personal note from Chairman Mao.

The scope and scale of the festival has grown in other ways. Disaffection among the younger and more progressive German filmmakers and critics in the late sixties resulted in 1971 in the introduction of the Forum of Young Cinema, whose presentation of political, avant-garde, and new cinema in general offsets the continuing orientation of the festival proper toward an essentially commercially based cinema.

Berlin's special distinction, however, is the role it has developed recently as a time machine, as its retrospective presentations have grown in importance and popularity. A lot of people now come to Berlin for these alone; and this year the Astor Cinema on the Kurfurstendamm proved far too small for the mixture of old nostalgists and enthusiastic new audiences who were discovering for the first time (in a three-part retrospective) Eleanor Powell, Conrad Veidt, and the accomplishment and vitality of the German sound film in the years just before Hitler.

Since the Forum of Young Cinema also integrates retrospective shows into its

program, the new festival films are seen in the context of a broad historical continuity. *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* (the Gold Prize winner) or *All the President's Men* or *The Man Who Fell to Earth* takes on new aspects when it is seen as part of a historical community with D. W. Griffith celebrating the Old West (*The Battle of Elderbush Gulch*), or exposing the evils of speculation (*A Corner in Wheat*) or urban poverty (*The Musketeers of Pig Alley*); with Lilian Harvey and Willy Fritsch cavorting in the hectic gaiety of the Weimar swansong; with Eleanor Powell tapping out the rhythms of America's thirties and forties; with Winsor McCay anticipating surrealism in the brilliant animation films he was making before the First World War.

McCay was for many people the most astonishing rediscovery. Everyone knew *Gertie the Dinosaur*, of course; but the Forum had dug out a lot of unknown material (some of it seemed to be working copies), including no less than three of his obsessive series of *Dreams of Rarebit Fiends*. One of these, the enchanting *Dream of a Rarebit Fiend: The Pet*, turned out to be a comic *King Kong* before the latter, featuring an insolently endearing little creature of undefined species, who is taken into a nice suburban home, and repays his hosts by eating and growing until he is big enough to stalk the city, gobbling up trams and trains.

Thom Anderson's *Eadweard Muybridge—Zoopraxographer*, which was given its German premiere by the Forum, takes moving pictures still further back, to the work of the English-born photographer who in the 1870s and 1880s developed the first successful method of analyzing movement in continuous series of instantaneous still photographs. Muybridge's own attempts to reconstitute his series of static images into the impression of motion were limited in their application; but Anderson's attempt to reanimate these century-old studies of motion with the aid of the cinematograph proves one of the most effective.

The athletes, horses, animals, graceful

girls, and unselfconscious children start into life once more under their far-off California sun. Anderson sometimes pushes his philosophic deductions too hard; but he does demonstrate how revolutionary in the late nineteenth-century world were Muybridge's revelations of movement and of the human body.

The past was sometimes a comfort and a retreat in Berlin, in the face, for example, of the disappointments provided by François Truffaut and Giuseppe Patroni-Griffi. Truffaut's *Argent de Poche* (*Small Change*) is a further essay on his passionate theme of the sanctity of the child and the child's vision; but the vaudeville of episodes in infant school life is inclined to get too cute. Some sequences—the proud secretiveness of a battered child; a self-possessed little girl who is left alone while her parents go to a restaurant, and repays them by using a loud bullhorn to inform the entire, sympathetic neighborhood that she is being starved—provide intermittent compensations.

Patroni-Griffi's *Divina Creatura*, adapted from Luciano Zuccoli's best-seller of the 1920s, invites very unflattering comparisons with Visconti's subtler treatment of Gabriel D'Annunzio in *L'innocente*, with which it has obvious narrative similarities. A classic situation of an aristocrat whose *amour fou* for a mysterious beauty sours to resentment when he discovers that she is the whore of his cousin. The film would have benefited from more imaginative casting than Laura Antonelli (nobody's idea of a *femme fatale*), Terence Stamp, and Marcello Mastroianni as the triangle. The erotic frenzy, which Patroni-Griffi so successfully generated in his *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (where, it's true, he had Charlotte Rampling), is altogether wanting; and the over-emphatic, Liberty-style decoration clearly shows that style is not a matter of set decoration alone.

Apart from Yugoslavia's *The Beach Guard in Winter*, written and directed by Ante Babaja—an affectionate record of the human and social problems of a nobody, which recalls the lamented Czech

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THE WRITER UNBLOCKED

Not since the Golden Fifties have TV writers had the opportunities provided by "Visions," a new PBS drama series.

Bruce Cook

They didn't call it the Golden Age of Television because of all the classy technology they had available back in the fifties: "Studio One," "The Philco Television Playhouse," and the "Armstrong Circle Theater" were shot live with three cameras in studios so small they would make the Eyewitness News set at your local station look like Sound Stage One at Universal.

They didn't call it the Golden Age of Television because all the top acting talent was then clamoring to get exposure on the little screen: Television was considered pure poison to the career of any screen actor, and many established stage actors who might have been interested were put off by the primitive production conditions and lack of rehearsal time.

They didn't call it the Golden Age of Television because of all the big directors who were then working in the medium: Arthur Penn, George Roy Hill, John Frankenheimer, Franklin Schaffner, and Sidney Lumet were just desperate young men trying to hold it all together; they became big directors later.

No, they called it the Golden Age of Television

because of the writers who got involved in it. For a relatively brief period the medium was open to established writers in other fields, such as Gore Vidal and Vance Bourjaily. And perhaps more important, during the fifties television developed its own writers, a corps of young playwrights writing specifically for television: Tad Mosel, Rod Serling, Paddy Chayefsky, Abby Mann, Reginald Rose, J. P. Miller, Robert Alan Aurthur. The entertainment industry borrowed for more than a decade on the writing capital accumulated by television during that period.

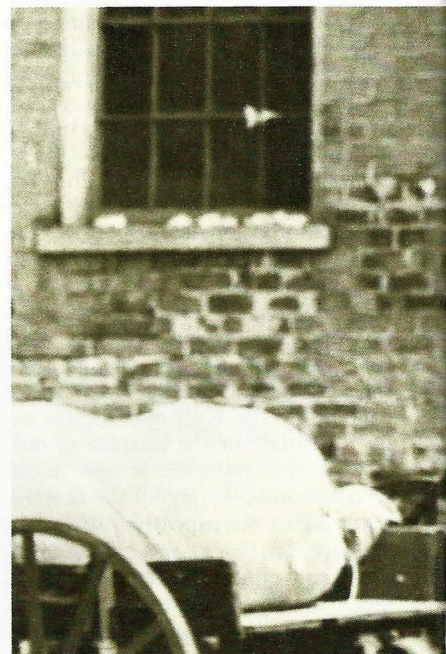
Don't get me wrong. What they wrote was not—or was, at best, very, very seldom—great drama. What differentiated it, however, from what we see on television today was that their plays represented an honest effort by working playwrights to deal with the problems of our lives in dramatic terms. And how much of *that* do you get on "Starsky and Hutch"?

"Things were more open back then. Why, take Tad Mosel. He was working as an airline reservation clerk. He watched television and thought,



Top: Katharine Bard and Pamela Bellwood in The War Widow, a drama commissioned for "Visions." It involves a lesbian affair.

Judd Hirsch and David Spielberg in Conrad Bromberg's videotaped Two Brothers.



Right: Brad Dourif stars in The Gardener's Son.



"Well, I can do that." He wrote a script and sent it in, and that's how he got to be a television playwright. He found a whole frame of reference for himself in this new medium. And what was true of him was also true of many, many writers back then."

That's Barbara Schultz talking—and she ought to know. She was story editor on the "Armstrong Circle Theater" at that time, as she was later for a number of series shows. She also served as executive producer on network television's last serious effort at quality anthology drama, the "CBS Playhouse." Her career proves she's committed to quality drama on television.

"Another way that things were more open back then," she continues, "is that writers had the chance to fail. There was so much drama being done in those days that a writer could try new things, had to. Nobody deliberately sets out to fail. He sets out to try something new—which sometimes doesn't work. When it doesn't, he has a chance to learn from his mistakes, and so for him it's worth something."

For the last couple of years, Barbara Schultz has been involved in public television's effort to recreate on a limited scale conditions similar to those that brought all those writers into television in the fifties. The New American Television Drama Unit, which she heads as artistic director, threw open the door to writers of all sorts—established and unestablished, novelists and playwrights—in a search for scripts with real dramatic value. She and her team of readers even went out looking for material from groups not usually represented on either commercial or public television. The results of this wide-ranging talent search will be put on display in "Visions," public television's new hour-and-a-half weekly series of seventeen dramatic shows, beginning the twenty-first of October. A second season is already scheduled and is well along in production.

It was especially important to Schultz that "Visions" be a weekly series, rather than presented as a number of dramatic "specials" throughout the year. "We've got to create an audience for ourselves, for one thing," she says. "And for another, it's this whole idea of the dramatic *special* that's made it so hard to upgrade the general level of drama on television—the idea that if it's good it's special, exceptional. The way it has been on television for a decade or more, it has to be 'Eleanor and Franklin'—which is great—to be even good. We're trying to create a climate, an environment for writers on television and win them a regular audience at the same time. That's why the weekly schedule is so important."

The series has not been produced on the cheap. Corners have been cut; money has been saved wherever possible. But an average budget of \$210,000, per production, as well as the participation of fine actors such as Judd Hirsch, Kevin Conway, James Broderick, and Ned Beatty at well below their usual fees, has guaranteed first-rate produc-

tions in a wide variety of styles—film, videotaped play, and in at least one instance, an employment of videotape in so venturesome a manner that the finished product might well be called a videotape movie.

The search for unsolicited material was headed by story editor Sandra Schulberg. And although she and her assistant, Miya Iwataki, have read through some 3,000 scripts, as yet no work by a mute, inglorious Milton has made it into the production schedule—though a few possibilities are still pending. Schulberg contacted writers' conferences, feminist groups, and local public television stations in search of material. And Iwataki, with a background in minority organizing, went after material from Third World and minority groups.

Looking back, Iwataki says that she is "encouraged to find so many people—and so many different kinds of people—thinking about their situations. There were many, many scripts about the woman question and senior citizens' scripts—people wanting to communicate something about their own situations. A lot of this, however, came across as writing-as-catharsis. Not usually with good results."

"We were very conscientious," says Schulberg. "We wanted to find unsolicited work that was good. The fact that we found so little is an indication of how hard it is to be a writer."

Does this mean that minorities' and feminists' viewpoints are *not* represented in the "Visions" series? Not at all. It simply means that Schulberg and Schultz had to solicit material from writers who they thought might have something to say from a particular point of view.

Take *El Corrido*. That came from El Teatro Campesino, a Chicano performing troupe with informal ties to Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers of America. Luis Valdez, director of the troupe, is the

playwright-of-record, but the work evolved from improvisations and routines to which the entire group contributed. Essentially a theater piece, *El Corrido* is a kind of Chicano-style *Everyman*, a morality play describing the plight of a typical wet-back who comes north of the border to try to earn enough to help out back home. He winds up slaving away his life as a migrant worker in the fields only to die, alone and alienated, in a big-city *barrio*. It is the very stuff of tragedy. Yet, as presented by El Teatro Campesino, it is done with song, dance, and pointed satire in a marvelously ironic style that absolutely quivers with energy. It is altogether new to television, but as old as the theater itself.

Or take another: *Gold Watch*, by Momoko Iko. Her play is a largely autobiographical story of what happens to one Japanese family in rural Washington state between Pearl Harbor and its relocation to a camp in the interior. It is a well written and at times powerful play, beautifully acted, and featuring a moving Emmy-sized performance by Mako, the great Japanese actor. Mako himself, I learned from Iko, took the play to "Visions." His troupe, the East-West Players, had done it at the Los Angeles Inner City Cultural Center.

"I didn't even know he had submitted it," says Iko, a Chicago teacher-turned-writer. "But then I got a call from 'Visions,' and it was already practically arranged. Sure, there was a lot of rewriting. It had to be changed from a stage play to, well, practically a movie. But as for the results, I guess I can only say that I didn't expect to see anything so close to what I originally envisioned. A very interesting experience for me."

As for Harvey Perr, author of *The War Widow*, he was put in touch with "Visions" in more or less the routine professional way: His agent heard about the project and got in touch with Schultz. Perr was even then a fairly well-established young playwright. He



Mako, above, the outstanding Japanese actor, is featured with Shizuko Hoshi and Jesse Dixon, at right, in *Gold Watch*, a drama of a Japanese family in rural Washington during World War II.





El Corrido, with Scorro Cruz, Felix Alvarez, and Lily Alvarez, all members of a Chicano performing troupe.

Barbara Schultz, artistic director of "Visions," wants to create a regular, weekly audience for quality writers on television.



had had plays produced off-Broadway and at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Schultz met with him, they discussed ideas, and eventually she approved a treatment that he prepared on one of them. All quite routine. What is unexpected, though, is that *The War Widow* turns out to be a play with a strong feminist theme, and one that treats lesbian love quite sympathetically. "Oh, do you think of it as a feminist play?" Perr poses. "I don't. I just think of it as a human drama. I began by wanting to do a period piece and did research in the World War I era, and somehow whatever theme it has just took over. No one came to me and said, 'Write a feminist play.' It was my idea. I presented it. They said, 'Go ahead.'"

As told by Perr, it all sounds rather cut and dried, but by Schultz's own estimate, two to three plays were developed for every one put into production. What happened to those that fell by the wayside? "Very often," she says, "you start something, and it just doesn't work. An idea sometimes sounds better when it is discussed than when you see it on paper. There's the matter of medium. Some ideas are more novelistic than dramatic. In all these cases, working through rewrites and revisions, I'm always the one who doesn't want to give up, who is certain that what we're looking for must be in there somewhere. That's because my approach to producing is that of a story editor. That's how I started out. I want to work with the writer. I want to protect the writer's intention to the end."

This story editor's approach seems to have satisfied all the writers who worked with Schultz on the "Visions" projects. Jean Shepherd, humorist, novelist, and nonstop radio talker, was very posi-

tive regarding the treatment he had received: "There were simply no problems. Barbara suggested a few changes in the script to my show, *The Phantom of the Open Hearth*. She would say, 'I'd like to hear more from this guy,' and so on. She never said, 'Write this,' or 'Don't write that.' The title and the structure of the phantom of the open hearth legend in the steel mills, in fact, came from her. In an earlier version of the script, I just alluded to the legend, and she seized upon it, wanted to know more, wanted to know all about it. I saw that it could be helpful in structuring the entire script. Obviously, she thought so, too."

The Phantom of the Open Hearth is one of a number of shows in the "Visions" series over which Schultz chose not to exercise direct control. About half of the shows—including *El Corrido*, *Gold Watch*, and *The War Widow*—were shot on videotape right at KCET, the PBS station in Los Angeles. The other half were contracted out to be done by various filmmakers—on film. Fred Barzik of Boston public television station WGBH, had worked with Shepherd earlier. He heard "Visions" was looking for material and convinced Shepherd it would be worth a try. "We wrote her a letter," says Shepherd, "and she wrote back asking for ideas. We wrote up one, and it came back with approval. It's rather an unusual way of working for television, to say the least. Then when it came time to shoot the movie, which we did in sixteen days, Barbara didn't even ask to see the rushes. We just presented her with the finished film. Talk about autonomy! I'm spoiled for the movies."

Richard Pearce, a young New York documentary filmmaker (he was associate producer of the Academy Award-winning documentary, *Hearts and Minds*), was another who became involved in one of "Visions'" "outside" projects. He was asked for ideas and presented one to Schultz for which he had already done some research on an Alicia Patterson Foundation Fellowship. "I'd gotten interested in early factory towns," says Pearce. "I read and traveled around in the South and New England and came up with this story, a footnote to the life of an early industrialist, William Gregg. It concerned the death of his son in a factory town in Tennessee."

Given a go-ahead, Pearce had then to look

around for somebody to write the script for the film. He went after novelist Cormac McCarthy (*The Orchard Keeper*, *Outer Dark*, and *Child of God*). "I didn't know Cormac personally, but I knew his work. He was willing to try a screenplay—it was his first—and we worked on it a year altogether, back and forth. I actually spent a month with him on it, during which we spun out all the variants until we had worked out the approach to the story we wanted. Then he went to his home in Tennessee and wrote. Barbara actually saw the second draft. She made some suggestions, and I told her some additional things we were thinking about. She said, 'Fine, go ahead.' She felt good about the project. It's been a wonderful relationship. She has a real capacity to take risks with people."

The film, *The Gardener's Son*, was shot in and around an abandoned nineteenth-century textile mill outside Burlington, North Carolina. It has one of the strongest casts of any of the "Visions" productions. The lead role is played by Brad Dourif, who got an Academy Award nomination for his role in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and among the supporting players are Kevin Conway and Ned Beatty. "The whole thing works this way," says Richard Pearce. "If you have a good script, then the actors read it and want to do it. I was fortunate in that regard to be working with Cormac McCarthy."

Playwright-actor Conrad Bromberg teaches screenwriting at New York University, and although he had had a number of plays produced (including the esteemed *Dream of a Blacklisted Actor*), he felt strongly that the story he proposed to Schultz (which became the series' opener, *Two Brothers*) should be done as a film. When he found out they planned to shoot it on tape, he was disappointed and said so. "But no," he says, "Barbara told me very emphatically, 'Write it the way you want to write it. Write it like a film.'"

And that Conrad Bromberg did. Of *Two Brothers*' thirty-six scenes, seventeen were shot on location. These included scenes taped at night and others done in moving cars. All in all, the work done in *Two Brothers* is about the most creative and resourceful use of videotape I have seen in any television production.

"They were doing incredible things," says Bromberg. "Like rolling right down Western Avenue in Los Angeles in a caravan of three cars connected by hookup wires! I asked one of the crew, 'Have you ever done anything like this before?' He said, 'No, nobody ever demanded it.'" Well, Conrad Bromberg, Barbara Schultz, and Bert Brinckerhoff demanded, and the crew delivered—a videotape "film" that stretches the very limits of tape technology. "And I think this is terrifically important," says Bromberg. "Because if you can use videotape with this kind of flexibility, then

you can make a ninety-minute show for \$200,000. And at costs like that you can begin to develop quality television." Which is what Schultz had in mind all the time.

Like all "Visions" writers, Bromberg was on hand during production—in his case, for a week of rehearsal and for ten days of shooting. "It was the best working experience of my life," he says. "The only rewriting on the spot I had to do was done when a camera problem came up and had to be written around. I was on locations with them, and in studio taping, I was right there in the booth with Barbara and Bert. Just once they lost a morning through trouble of one kind or another. Things got a little tight, and I was invited to spend the afternoon elsewhere. No hysterics, and we went back to the old arrangement next morning."

It was such a good experience for him, he says, that he would gladly work steadily in television if he could expect similar treatment. But, he points out, there are certain barriers: "I wouldn't mind being a hack for a while, doing a series with Jack Klugman, or something. But I can't do that because if I did, that's where the industry would peg me. For example, I wrote for soaps. But I can't let people know that because if I did, that's where I'd be categorized. By the same token, when I'm up for work today, and I tell people the experience I've had, they get this look in their eyes that says, 'Oh, public television.' Pegging you, playing the career game."

"I know writers who would like to do all kinds of writing—for television, for movies, for the stage, whatever, and I guess I'm one of them. But the only people who can do that without getting pegged are the people who are on top. For instance, if Norman Mailer were to do a sequence for 'Kojak,' it would be considered a lark. Nobody would think, 'Well, Mailer is now a TV series writer and nothing more.' Why do we need these categories? What good are they?"

"It's a shame, really, because the weakest area overall in television and movies is the writing. There may be ten good writers in television and film, but that's too few. And a lot of people in the industry and outside of it are beginning to notice and wonder. So many areas have improved—technology, certainly, and the level of direction and acting is very, very high. But still, somehow, it's not working, and it's because the writing isn't there. And so, little by little, as people realize this, the writer is gaining in importance."

Bromberg is right, of course. And those in the industry who have given any thought to it have known it was so for quite some time. Some of those outside the industry have known it even longer. Does this mean that with the dawning of this realization and the new opportunities offered by "Visions," another Golden Age is on its way? Hardly. But at this point we'd settle for silver alloy. Or copper even. ■

Bruce Cook is a contributing editor of *American Film*.

AFI NEWS

A newsletter from the American Film Institute on its activities and programs.

LOST AND FOUND: The AFI film collection has been enhanced by the loan of nitrate prints from the personal collection of director William Wyler, recipient of the 1976 Life Achievement Award. Three of his early films, The Love Trap (1929), Blazing Days (1927), and The Stolen Ranch (1927), have been transferred to safety stock and permanently preserved for film scholars....In a project to assemble a complete version of Frank Capra's 1937 film, Lost Horizon, AFI archivists have been searching for bits and pieces of the film and soundtrack. Recently the entire soundtrack for the original release version and four additional minutes of the film were found in a European film archive; this discovery leaves 13 minutes of the original film still missing. The AFI preservation staff would welcome contact from anyone owning a complete or partial copy of this important film.

NEW YORK/CHICAGO: The 14th Annual New York Film Festival takes place this month at the Alice Tully Hall of Lincoln Center. Featured are more than 20 recent international films, including Nagisa Oshima's Empire of the Senses, Marcel Ophuls' Memory of Justice, Francois Truffaut's Small Change, and Eric Rohmer's The Marquise of O. Selection Committee for the festival included Festival Director Richard Roud, Richard Corliss, Arthur Knight, Arthur Mayer, Susan Sontag, Roger Greenspun, Charles Michener, and Henri Langlois. Interest is expected to be as high as last year, when a boxoffice record was set with near-capacity crowds....The Film Center of the Art Institute of Chicago has moved into a new 285-seat theater. Its October program includes screenings of "In Glorious Black and White," the eight-film tribute to Hollywood cameramen compiled by AFI with a grant from the Exxon Corporation.

WHAT'S WHERE: Locating film documents is becoming increasingly difficult for film scholars as scores of universities, museums, and other institutions gather collections. To the rescue comes the Union Catalog of Motion Picture and Television Manuscripts and Special Collections, due for 1977 publication by the Film and Television Study Center, a non-profit consortium of ten research and education institutions. The Catalog will list the holdings of more than 70 libraries, museums, colleges and universities, state historical societies, and other organizations in 11 Western states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming). While 90 percent of the material is located in California institutions, the Catalog advisory board deemed it valuable to include other states where film scholars could have access to collections of scripts, production notes and schedules, press clippings, photos, costumes, and related materials. Anne Schlosser, librarian at AFI-West, is project director and sits on the Catalog advisory committee with Mildred Simpson of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library, Bob Knutson of the University of Southern California Special Collections Library, Audree Malkin, University of California at Los Angeles Theater Arts Library, and Elizabeth Armstrong, California Institute of Arts Library. Linda Harris Mehr, bibliographer for the Catalog, is visiting each listed institution to verify its collections. The project is supported by a National Endowment for the Arts grant. The Film and Television Study Center is located at 6233 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 203, Los Angeles, CA 90028.

DIRECTORS GET THEIR DUE: The Directors Guild of America has set up a program to focus attention on directors' activities. A history project will encompass a speakers' bureau, retrospectives of directors' films, and oral history programs. The retrospectives will be screened in major cities and on college campuses. Former DGA president Robert Wise headed the efforts to establish the new program.

UCLA ARCHIVE: The UCLA Film Archive has concluded negotiations with National Telefilm Associates to acquire more than 3,000 original nitrate negatives from a collection of films from Republic Studios and the Paramount Short Subjects Library. In another important preservation action, the Archive recently transferred to acetate two early Fox Studios sound films from the only known extant nitrate prints. The films are Goldie (1931), with Spencer Tracy and Jean Harlow, and Soup to Nuts (1930), written and produced by Rube Goldberg and featuring the first film appearance of the Three Stooges.

VIDEO ART GRANTS: Video artists are eligible for the Visual Arts Program Fellowships, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Awards range up to \$10,000 and are made in three categories of professional development. Requests for Individual Grant Application NEA-2 should be directed to the Visual Arts Program, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C. 20506. Application deadline is October 15, 1976.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT: Peter B. Wert, former Eastern Regional Director of the University of Chicago's development office, has been appointed Director of Development for AFI. In this post, he will coordinate the Institute's fund raising efforts, especially in the private sector. J. R. Taft and Company of Washington, which has been advising AFI on development projects, will continue its consulting relationship with the Institute.

PEOPLE UPDATE: Eileen Bowser has been promoted from Associate Curator to Curator of New York's Museum of Modern Art Department of Film. A staff member of MOMA since 1953, she has been primarily responsible for cataloging the Museum's D.W. Griffith collection. She now assumes direction of the film archive as well as the two exhibition programs, "Films from the Archive" and "Recent Acquisitions." ...Robert Rosen, Director of the UCLA Film Archive, was recently elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Film and Television Study Center in Hollywood.... The new editor of Cinema Journal, published by the Society for Cinema Studies, is Jack C. Ellis. He succeeds Richard Dyer MacCann, editor of the magazine for the past ten years.... Frank Berman, retired head of Movielab, is acting as a volunteer consultant to the Film Department at the Museum of Modern Art. He will establish and maintain quality evaluation procedures for prints being generated for the museum's archives.

The American Film Institute

Washington

George Stevens, Jr., Director; Richard Carlton, Deputy Director; Adrian Borneman, Assistant to the Director; Bruce Weiner, Associate Director for Finance and Administration; Peter Wert, Development Director; Richard Jones, Chief Accountant; Win Sharples, Administrator; Preservation and Documentation; Lawrence Karr, Motion Picture Archivist; Michael Webb, Film

Programming Manager; Larry Klein, AFI Theater Supervisor; Richard Krafur, Executive Editor, The American Film Institute Catalog; Gary Arlen, Public Information Officer; Sam Grogg, Jr., Education Liaison; Winifred Rabbitt, Membership Secretary; Ina Ginsburg, Chairman, Fans of AFI.

Los Angeles

Martin Manulis, Director, AFI-West; Antonio Vellani, Chairman, Senior Faculty; Nina Foch, Senior Faculty; Jan Kadar,

Filmmaker-in-Residence; Jan Haag, Head, Independent Filmmaker Program, Directing Workshop for Women, Academy Internship Program; John Bloch, William Fadiman, Lois Peyser, Writer's Workshop; Christopher Chessner, General Manager; James Powers, Director of Center Publications; Anne G. Schlosser, Librarian, Charles K. Feldman Library; Nancy Peter, Registrar; Jackie Frame, Assistant to the Director, AFI-West; Roman I. Harte, Production Manager; Howard Schwartz, Cinematographer; Vaclav Koudelka, Film Librarian.

Dialogue on Film



Ernest Lehman

An inquiry into the arts and crafts of filmmaking through interview seminars between Fellows and prominent filmmakers held at Greystone, under the auspices of The American Film Institute's Center for Advanced Film Studies. This educational series is directed by James Powers.

Screenwriter Ernest Lehman's name is often linked with Alfred Hitchcock's, as if together they had conspired on a trunkful of thrillers. In fact, the collaboration has produced only two films—the more recent *Family Plot* and the more stunning *North by Northwest*.

Actually, Lehman's screenwriting ranges far beyond thrillers. Lehman likes to recall that the same issue of *Variety* carried reviews of *The King and I* and *Somebody Up There Likes Me*. The King of Siam might not have much to say to Rocky Graziano, but Lehman, who wrote the two scripts, is on easy terms with both.

In a screenwriting career that spans twenty-five years, Lehman has been the adapter's adapter, the writer called in on the big projects, the valuable "properties." (*North by Northwest* is the exception—an original script based on nothing more than a witty imagination.) He has turned such successful stage musicals as *West Side Story* and *The Sound of Music* into even more successful film musicals—*The Sound of Music*, in fact, long ago ceased to be a film and became a sentimental institution. He has transformed Edward Albee's celebrated drama, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, into a bold movie that launched a new director, Mike Nichols, and a new screen frankness. He has translated best-sellers like John

O'Hara's *From the Terrace* into creditable screen dramas.

Lehman's projects, because they invariably involve highly publicized works, have not been free of controversy. Stage hits, particularly musicals, have ardent supporters who don't take kindly to screen versions. His revisions of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* had to face the predictable charge of tampering. One labor of love, a screen version of Philip Roth's quintessentially bawdy novel, *Portnoy's Complaint*, turned sour.

But throughout Lehman's screen work there has been a consistent attention to currently neglected virtues: the structured drama, the crafted scene, the polished phrase. By his own description, Lehman belongs to the Act I-Act II-Act III school of screenwriting. He can note with approval "the raw, unpolished power" of *Taxi Driver*, but his own commitment is to careful craftsmanship.

Lehman's allegiance to creative tidiness may owe its origins to his college days when his ambition was to be not a writer, but a chemical engineer. On the south shore of Long Island, where he grew up, that was a more respectable ambition. But while pursuing a science degree at the City College of New York, Lehman was lured to the unscientific pleasures of a narrative writing class. The class was taught by Theodore Goodman, something of a legend at City College. Soon, under his sway, Lehman threw over-

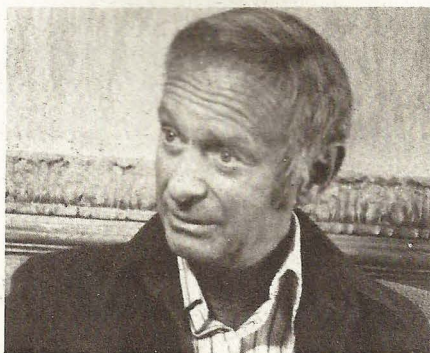
science and took up writing.

Success was almost immediate. Lehman's short stories and articles turned up in *Esquire*, *Colliers*, and *Harper's*, and one unpublished story was sold to Hollywood and made into the film *The Inside Story*. The sale further whetted Lehman's interest in screenwriting—"that had always been one of my ambitions." When his novella, *The Comedian*, appeared in *Cosmopolitan* in 1952, Paramount called with an invitation "to come out and write screenplays."

Within a month, Lehman and family set out for Hollywood. He started as a contract writer at Paramount, but was borrowed by MGM for his first film, *Executive Suite*, made in the capable company of John Houseman as producer and Robert Wise as director. If there were influences on Lehman's screenwriting, he is hard pressed to name them. "I think I have been influenced," he explains, "by a lifetime of going to the movies."

Lehman's career has been unusual because he has refused the safe haven of the writer's study; he has been what Hollywood calls a hyphenate. He was writer-producer for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *Hello, Dolly!*. He was writer-producer-director for *Portnoy's Complaint*.

If Hitchcock and Lehman are linked in the public mind, they seem linked in Lehman's mind, too. Hitchcock, also, has always had a low tolerance for films of "raw, unpolished power," and for him Lehman can deliver the well-crafted script, confident of a like-minded collaborator. When a critic recently spoke of the "elegant script" for *Family Plot*, Lehman was pleased. Hitchcock, Lehman points out, "doesn't like characters to be too inelegant, even if they're murderers."



Question: You've written screenplays for some highly regarded directors—Mike Nichols, Alfred Hitchcock, Robert Wise. They're also very demanding directors. How well have you survived these encounters?

Lehman: There is a long pause here before I answer this question. You've hit a sore spot in the life of any screenwriter, including this one. My most easygoing relationship was with Robert Wise, with whom I did four pictures, though even with him I had my moments here and there. The screenwriter winds up for the most part in an antagonistically cooperative or cooperatively antagonistic relationship with everyone he's working with—the producer, the director, even the actors, if they're intellectual types

like Paul Newman or Burt Lancaster. Almost everyone unconsciously feels he knows as much about writing as a writer. It would be unthinkable for a writer to tell a director how to direct or a producer how to produce or an actor how to act or a cinematographer how to light a scene. But it is not at all unthinkable for *anyone* to tell a writer how to write. It comes with the territory.

Now that is bound to produce problems for you, unless you have a superlatively integrated psyche so that you can take anything and always remember that it's the picture that counts. But your ego, your sense of professionalism, come into play, and you often notice a glaze coming into the eyes of the director and the producer when the script is finished. You get the subtle feeling that they would not weep if you got hit by a truck. I am not exaggerating.



Somehow the mere fact that the director didn't write the picture—he is only directing it—is very difficult for him to take, and some of them have never learned to take it. It's equally difficult for the producer. I've been a writer-producer on three pictures. After you've struggled with the script, done some of the casting, and somehow it has been your picture, in comes the director. Once that picture starts shooting he's the captain of the 747, and it's pretty tough to move to the back of the plane and just sit there, particularly if you see things you don't like in the dailies. Sometimes it gets to be an antagonistic relationship, to put it mildly.

Question: Can a writer ever have the upper hand in these confrontations?

Lehman: The only way that a writer can have the upper hand is to write something that is so unfailingly, unarguably perfect that there's just no way that anybody can take any objection to it. The problem is, who the hell knows whether it's that good, including the writer? It's a very inexact science. Everybody has an opinion. My advice is to be smart enough or lucky enough in all these creative battles to lose the right battles. I have been very lucky: I have fought for things that would have been awful if I had won, and I have fought for things which other people didn't want and was lucky enough to win. But I don't know what the rules are.

I think you have to understand that people feel threatened by a writer. It's very curious. He knows something they don't know. He knows how to write, and that's a

Francesca De Sapio, Karen Black, and Richard Benjamin in Portnoy's Complaint,

written, produced, and directed by Ernest Lehman.



subtle, disturbing quality that he has. Some directors, without even knowing it, resent the writer in the same way that Bob Hope might resent the fact that he ain't funny without twelve guys writing the jokes. The director knows that the script he is carrying around on the set every day was *written* by someone, and that's just not something that all directors can digest too easily. This is not true of all directors, of course, but I've had a few experiences and so have other screenwriters.

Question: Let's take Mike Nichols as a specific example. You both must have had strong ideas about the adaptation of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* What contributions, say in dialogue, did he make?

Lehman: Mike Nichols did not have any ideas for dialogue. Wisely so, because I think the result on the screen is mighty powerful. The movie knocks me out every time I see it. Nichols managed to get me to give up not *everything*, but *almost* everything that I introduced into the screenplay that wasn't in the play.

Question: For example?

Lehman: Lines of dialogue or the moving about of scenes. At one time I even created other characters. There were many versions of this screenplay—I think I wrote six. I hate to tell you some of the awful ideas I had which I then thought were good. At one time I even wrote in the son as having actually existed and having committed suicide. His suicide was more than his mother could bear, and she had to create a fantasy that he was still alive. Now if *Virginia Woolf* had never been written as a play but were an original screenplay, I think it would have been a hell of a dramatic moment when George forces Martha to look into the closet where the boy hung himself. But that would have violated the spirit of a famous play. A screenwriter is caught in a kind of trap when he is working on something so famous that if he dares to tamper with it, he gets hung, and if he *doesn't* change it sufficiently, he gets hung.

Question: Most of your screenplays have been adaptations. *North by Northwest*, instead, was an original. What problems did that pose?

Lehman: It was extremely difficult. It was fun in a way but it was extremely difficult. I recall having tried to quit that picture at least a dozen times, unknown to Mr. Hitchcock, who was off shooting *Vertigo* while I was writing the first seventy-odd pages of the screenplay. I never knew what the hell I was going to write next. But that's the way things are written unless you're working on other people's material. Before I came to Hollywood I was a writer of short stories and novellas. I used to pace the streets of Man-

hattan wondering what he or she said next or what the next scene was. That's what writing is all about, which is not to say that it's easy to write a good screenplay based on someone else's work. That can be impossible too, but it is a different experience.

Question: *North by Northwest* is a field day in the variety of locations. Did you choose all the locations first?

Lehman: No. There was a lot of discussion between Hitch and myself, months and months of talk, and a vague idea as to where the story was moving, up to a certain point. At that point he went off to make *Vertigo*, and I went off on a research trip. In fact, I went through quite a few of the adventures that Cary Grant eventually went through. I hadn't written the screenplay yet, so I didn't know some of the locations.

I decided to go East. I went to the United Nations and spent five days there just getting the feel of the place and trying to figure out what would be a good place for a murder. I finally decided that the Delegates' Lounge, which I call the Public Lounge in the screenplay, was a great place for a murder. Then I went out to Glen Cove on Long Island because I knew the Russian delegation to the United Nations lived in a mansion there. I hung around Glen Cove, got introduced to a local judge, and said that I wanted him to put me through the whole routine of being picked up for drunken driving. He did it, and it was fun.

Then I hung around Grand Central Station a bit, got on the Twentieth Century Limited and went to Chicago. I also looked around the train and picked up ideas. In Chicago I checked in at the Ambassador East. From there I went to Rapid City, South Dakota, hired a forest ranger on his day off, and said, "I want to climb to the top of Mount Rushmore to see what's up there." I got halfway to the top. It's really perilous and steep. I looked down and I thought, what the hell am I doing here? I'm a writer. I told him, "I'm not going another step."

I bought the ranger a Polaroid camera, and he went up the next day and photographed the top. There is nothing up there, nothing. That was bad news. Eventually, we just constructed the top of Mount Rushmore at MGM. The U.S. Department of Parks kicked us out before we could begin shooting, so everything but one long shot of Mount Rushmore was built on a sound stage at MGM.

Question: Was the crop-dusting sequence your idea?

Lehman: Hitch and I acted out the entire crop-dusting sequence in his living room. Then I incorporated every move into the script, and that was the way he shot it.

Question: It's such a visual scene that it doesn't seem a scene a *writer* would choose.



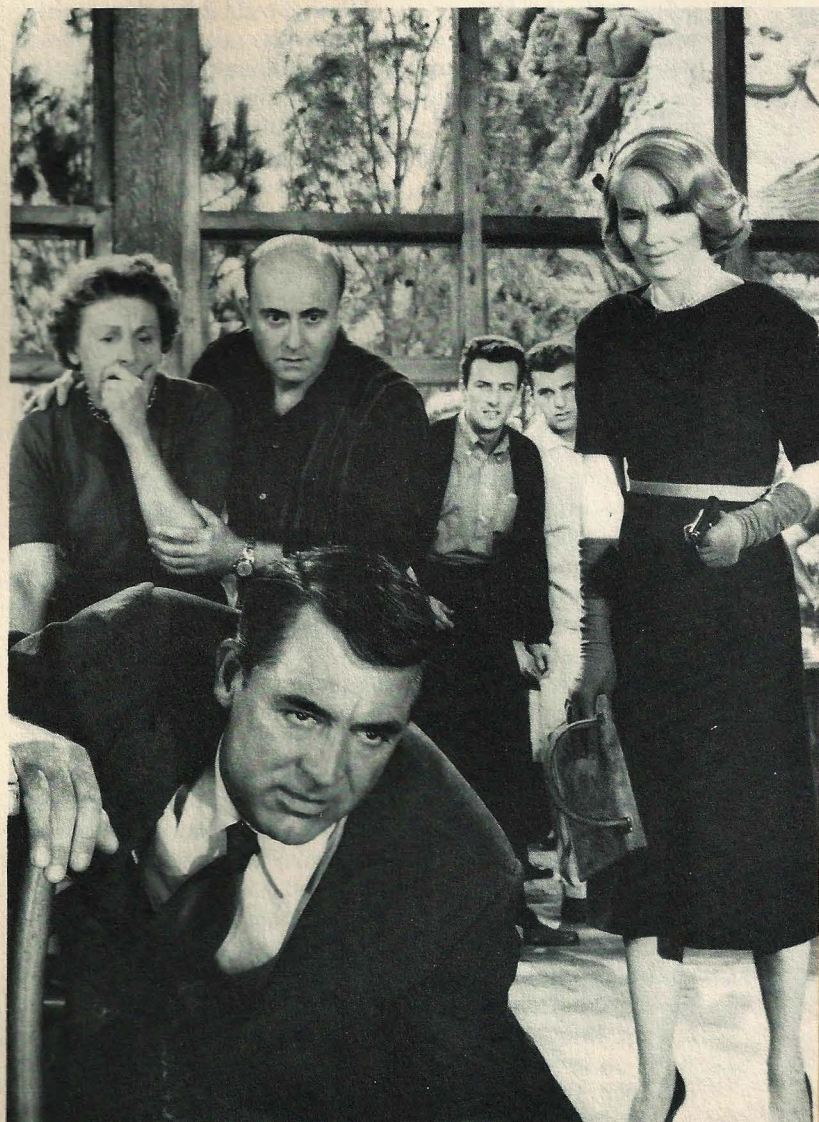
Cinematographer Robert Burks, director Alfred Hitchcock, and screenwriter Lehman on location for the crop-dusting sequence in North by Northwest.



Cary Grant and James Mason in North by Northwest. Lehman researched the film by experiencing adventures he wrote for Grant's character.

Lehman: It seems visual, therefore, the writer has nothing to do with it. Is that what you're trying to say? That is utter nonsense. Let me tell you something, as long as I'm sitting up here on this high horse. Read the first page of the screenplay of *The Sound of Music*, which describes the opening of the film. It was the first time I used the first person singular in a screenplay. I just said, "Here's what I want to see on the screen. Here's the effect I want." I want. And you know what? I got it.

Question: Hitchcock is famous for planning all his shots ahead of time, for preparing storyboards. In *North by Northwest* and in *Family Plot*, how much did you participate in this kind of detailed planning?



Mount Rushmore is the backdrop as Eva Marie Saint "shoots" Grant. When the U.S. Department of Parks prohibited location shooting, the Rushmore scenes were filmed on a Hollywood sound stage.

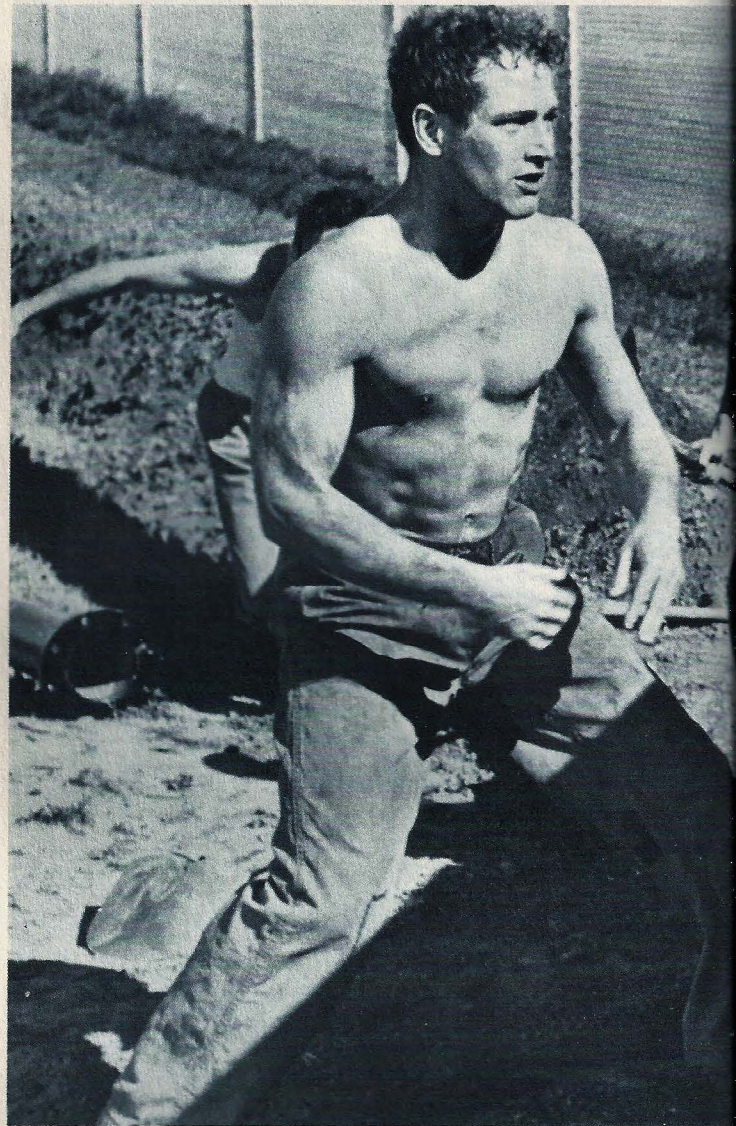
Lehman: Storyboarding is really an illustrator's work for the director. A motion picture illustrator puts pictures on paper and puts them on boards. In storyboarding a script for a Hitchcock film, the illustrator is told what pictures to put on the boards by the script, which has benefited from my conferences with the director. Of course, I participate in what is going to appear on that storyboard, because even without the storyboard the script describes exactly what is going to be on the screen. Hitch would have it no other way. The script even describes the size of the shot, whether it's a medium or a tight close-up, whether the camera pulls back and pans to the right as the character walks toward the door, whether it tilts slightly down and shoots through the open doorway getting the helicopter as the lights go on outside. That's why Hitch says it's a bore for him to get the picture on the screen, because it has all been done already in his office.

Question: In constructing characters, for Hitchcock or others, are you partly guided by what actors are available to play them?

Lehman: No—not usually, that is. But two things come to mind. *North by Northwest* was written more or less with Cary Grant in mind, and much more than less after I was halfway through. Jimmy Stewart thought he was going to play the role, and he kept calling up to ask, "How are you fellows coming?" But we really wanted Cary Grant. When we finally knew that we had Cary Grant, I was writing with him in mind.

The other thing that comes to mind is the new Hollywood. While I was writing the script of *Black Sunday*, Bob Evans, the producer, kept saying, "You'll have to do something with this role or we'll never get one of the superstars to play it." In other words, the role had to be juicy enough or have enough passion in it to appeal to certain stars, because Bob wanted big stars. He showed one of my drafts of the screenplay to Dustin Hoffman, knowing that Hoffman would *not* be available for the picture. Bob came to me and said, "Dusty thinks that you have to do so-and-so and so-and-so with that character." I said, "What the hell does Dusty have to say about what I do with that character?" He said, "Well, he's an actor, and he knows what will appeal to other actors, and we want an important actor." Now, Bob was being a good producer from his point of view. It irritated me a little bit, but I could see his point of view. It's hard to get a good actor if there isn't a good role. If you're looking for stars, if you're looking for Jack Nicholson, you'd better have a pretty powerful role, because everybody is looking for Nicholson.

Question: In *Virginia Woolf*, on which you were also producer, did you want Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton and George Segal and Sandy Den-



nis in those roles or did you have others in mind originally?

Lehman: The only actress I ever approached for the role of Martha was Taylor, after I had finally come to the decision and went to Jack Warner for his approval. It took a lot of thinking, until I finally went through the same number all over again with Burton. I didn't immediately get them as a team. First Elizabeth. She approved a list of actors, so that I could have gone to quite a few others. But finally I was lucky enough to realize that Burton was perfect. He was just great in that role. I think it was the best non-Oscar-winning performance I've ever seen. Sandy Dennis was the first and only choice. Mike Nichols and I wanted Bob Redford for the role of Nick, but he turned it down.

Question: You've adapted a number of stage works, particularly musicals, like *The Sound of Music*, *West Side Story*. What difference do you find between what works on stage and what works on the screen?

Lehman: I would say that sometimes a play that is nondramatic, without conflict, without any narrative drive, can



Paul Newman as boxer Rocky Graziano in *Somebody Up There Likes Me*. The simultaneous release of this film and *The King and I*, both Lehman scripts, indicated his versatility.

arrange the rumble, and "I Feel Pretty" was the first musical number after the rumble.

Question: Why did you make the change?

Lehman: To create and sustain a dramatic mood. I felt that "I Feel Pretty" was a happy number, something that would take the audience completely out of the mood of the film after two bodies are seen lying on the ground. I felt it was much more appropriate for that number to take place in the film when Maria was happy at the thought of meeting Tony that afternoon in the bridal shop.

Question: You were trying to keep a certain realism even within the confines of a musical?

Lehman: Right. When you're writing a musical for the screen, one of the big tricks is to find out, first of all, how to lead into the numbers in a way that catches an audience by surprise so that it doesn't suspect it's hearing a lead-in to a musical number. And second, the biggest feat of all, if you can get away with it, is to make it seem natural that there is dancing or singing in something as realistic or dramatic as, let's say, *West Side Story*. I'm sure you've heard about all the agonizing that Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins went through before finally deciding that the best way to approach the prologue was to shoot it out on the streets realistically. The gang gradually goes from just strolling along and finger snapping to slight dance movements and then to a full number. That set up a lot of belief on the part of the audience in all the musical elements that followed. But each musical has its own problems in being brought to the screen.

Question: Do you have a general pattern you follow in adapting a musical—for example, do you concentrate on the story and weave in the numbers?

Lehman: I don't think I go at it too formally. I've adapted *The King and I*, *The Sound of Music*, *West Side Story*, *Hello, Dolly!* Usually I see the show three or four or five times, and I begin to get ideas as I'm watching. I think, why the hell did they put that number *there*? I know it's working, and this is a famous Broadway musical, but I wonder if they ever realized that it would have been so much more effective *there*? For example, "Gee, Officer Krupke" in *West Side Story*. That's a hilarious number. But on the stage, "Gee, Officer Krupke" took place in the second act *after* the rumble had happened. To me that was totally out of dramatic context.

Now apparently it was perfectly all right for a Broadway audience to break into laughter at this funny number, even though the audience was supposed to be caught up in the terrible drama. But I don't think it would have worked in a movie at all. It may be immodest of me to say so, but I

work in the theater because it will have other things going for it which somehow absorb the audience. Particularly musicals. They can be nothing but fluff, pure fluff, like *Hello, Dolly!*, and if they're dazzlingly directed and choreographed, they can be a great evening in the theater.

The film medium is a little more demanding. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* had certain sections on the stage that were marvelous because of the language and the ideas that were being expressed. But somehow or other, even as I saw the play and was knocked out by it, I felt this is irrelevant to what's going on here dramatically; or, this is a digression from the direction of the story line. I felt that on the screen these things were not permissible.

In the case of *West Side Story*, it was a highly dramatic story on the stage, and it lent itself admirably to film adaptation. But I rearranged it quite a bit to keep the dramatic line very clean, and I moved around musical numbers. If you study the stage version, you'll find there are some significant changes in the placement of the numbers. For example, "Cool" worked beautifully in the film, I think, because it took place *after* the rumble, when the Jets were distraught as a result of the death of Riff. In the play, "Cool" was done before they met with the Sharks to

think "Gee, Officer Krupke" fit perfectly where it was placed in the movie. The Jets were quite nervous, they were going to meet the Sharks in the candy store, and all it took was a policeman coming along and telling them to get off the street to get them into a bitter, defiant, funny number.

Another example. The number "America" on the stage was purely about conditions in Puerto Rico, believe it or not. These were Puerto Ricans, transplanted to New York, singing about conditions in Puerto Rico. I thought it would be much more appropriate if the number "America" were about the conditions the Puerto Ricans encountered in America. So Saul Chaplin and I wrote a letter to Steve Sondheim. We sent him some dummy lyrics suggesting what we thought the song ought to be. The music remained the same, the dancing was pretty much the same, although it was filled out more by putting it up on a rooftop, but the lyrics now made a statement that was much more pertinent. In approaching a film musical you have certain guideposts, signposts, milestones. You know that you've got to somehow get to the well-known numbers, unless they happen to be something that you're going to throw out of the movie. In fact, we did throw a few things out of *West Side Story*.

In *The Sound of Music*, I did a lot of changing around of musical numbers. There again it seemed somehow inappropriate for the Mother Abbess to be singing "My Favorite Things." I felt how much more appropriate it was for Maria to try to pacify the children, who were frightened by the thunderstorm, and to tell them what she does when she gets upset. She thinks about some of her favorite things, and before you know it you're into the number. Much more appropriate. But musical numbers are what you must get to, and they shape your work in a way.

Question: Is it possible to say what qualities you look for in a novel when you go about making the decision whether or not to adapt it to the screen?

Lehman: The first thing I do is put on the hat of a studio head or the head of a distribution company and say to myself, is there something about this that might grab audiences? Motion pictures are an art form but also a business. Then the second thing that comes to mind is, is there something about this that appeals to me as a writer? The third thing I think of is, do I believe I have the ability to do this? Can I bring this one off? Do I have what it takes? You know, I can't do everything. *Portnoy's Complaint* is a perfect example of biting off more than I could chew. I had no idea how I intended to do it; all I knew was that I wanted to do it. I felt that it would be an enormous hit if it were done well. But I didn't know how to do it, as it turned out.

So I look for these things first of all, because there comes into my hands many projects from prominent pro-

ducers or producer-directors or heads of studios. I read the material and think, what the hell do they want to make that for? It doesn't have a chance. Either it's unwritable and they don't know it because they're not writers—I mean it's nondramatizable—or no one is going to see the movie. I don't tell them that. I just say that it doesn't seem to be right for me or something like that. But I'm always astonished at the decisions nonwriters make. Some of them don't realize the projects they have fallen in love with are probably unlickable.

Question: What do you think people want to see in a film?

Lehman: There are so many different kinds of films. That's what's so great about movies: There are so many different kinds. But there aren't many movies that just sock you right in the diaphragm. *Virginia Woolf* moved me to tears. To me, that's the hardest thing to find in a movie theater, something that really hits you hard. If it can make you weep, I would say that that is a miracle. I weep every time I see *Virginia Woolf* on television now. I was in very bad shape when I saw the play.

Question: You mentioned *Portnoy's Complaint*. What mistake do you think you made in adapting Philip Roth's novel?

Lehman: I think the mistake was in thinking that I had the ability to find a screen drama in that novel, because a film does have to be essentially dramatic. Without being all that formal, it should have a first, second, and third act. I think the beauty of that novel is not in its dramatic potentialities. The whole thing was first person singular, somebody lying on a couch talking to his analyst throughout the entire novel. A lot of it was interior, some of the very best of it was interior. Some of it could be dramatized, some of it couldn't. I would say a novel which is very, very interior probably is not going to make it as a film. There may be exceptions.

Question: In other words, *Portnoy's Complaint* was an impossible job?

Lehman: Let's say it was impossible, apparently, for me to do. Charles Champlin wrote that, on further thought, he felt that nobody could have done it successfully. But I don't see how anybody could say that. Possibly there is someone alive who could have written a good screenplay. Everyone thought the screenplay was excellent. It read very well. There are those who think perhaps the film might have been better if someone else had directed it instead of me. We'll never know.

I would say that *Portnoy's Complaint* was the wrong kind of picture for me to have chosen to direct for the first time.

Sandy Dennis, George Segal, and Elizabeth Taylor in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, adapted and produced by Lehman.

If I had chosen something which was more visual and less impossible, I might have, let's say, gotten by and been thought of as a potential director. In fact, it was a great personal experience until the picture opened, and I don't mean that as a joke. It really was a very heady experience. I don't seem to have any burning desire to go back to the problems of directing, because it's more than having a visual sense. Believe me, film directing is a hell of a lot more than it seems to be, including incredible physical endurance. Not all writers can be directors, not by a long shot.

Question: Did the problems in directing *Portnoy's Complaint* have to do with technical matters or with the actors?

Lehman: No, I had none of those problems, really. I shot the whole film on paper first. I took nine months and shot every master shot, every two-shot, every over-the-shoulder, every close-up, every tricky transition shot, everything, with a sketch artist. I had three sketch artists at one time, and I shot the whole film on paper. When we went out location hunting we would take the sketch books along

The Films of Ernest Lehman

Executive Suite—MGM—Robert Wise—1954
Sabrina—Paramount—Billy Wilder—co-screenplay—1954
The King and I—Twentieth Century-Fox—Walter Lang—1956
Somebody Up There Likes Me—MGM—Robert Wise—1956
Sweet Smell of Success—United Artists—Alexander Mackendrick—co-screenplay, based on a Lehman novella—1957
North by Northwest—MGM—Alfred Hitchcock—1959
From the Terrace—Twentieth Century-Fox—Mark Robson—1960
West Side Story—United Artists—Robert Wise, Jerome Robbins—1961
The Prize—MGM—Mark Robson—1963
The Sound of Music—Twentieth Century-Fox—Robert Wise—1965
*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?**—Warner Bros.—Mike Nichols—1966
*Hello, Dolly!**—Twentieth Century-Fox—Gene Kelly—1969
*Portnoy's Complaint**—Warner Bros.—Ernest Lehman—1972
Family Plot—Universal—Alfred Hitchcock—1976
Black Sunday—Paramount—John Frankenheimer—co-screenplay—scheduled to be released in 1977

*Also producer

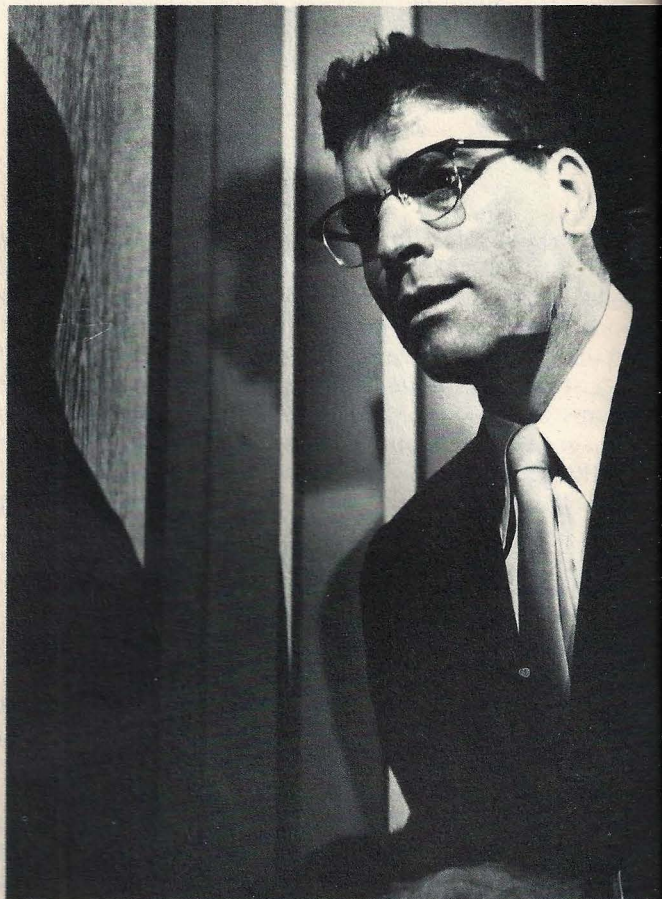


Natalie Wood mourns over Richard Beymer in the climactic scene of West Side Story. In adapting it for the screen, Lehman rearranged the order of some musical numbers.

and say, "Well, we've got to find a place that's like this. Oh, Nazareth, that would be great for that shot." Or when art director Robert Boyle was designing the sets he would look at how I was going to shoot the scene and say, "Let's see now. No, the door can't be over there. It's got to be over here. Ernie wants to come down in a dolly shot starting in her bedroom and taking her through a corridor and down the steps and over to the table, to have her lean down, open a cigarette box, and then walk left to right over to the bar. And he wants the camera to be able to dolly over to the bar and hold her and Dick Benjamin in a two-shot." They had to build a set that would permit that, so I never really had to do any homework at night because it was all done. I never had to walk out on a set and have people look at me and say, "Well, what do we do now?" I never had any technical problems, though I had some problems dealing with actors.

Question: Getting them to give the results you were after?

Lehman: Either that, or my trying to understand what was good and what wasn't. I had never worked with actors



Burt Lancaster as the vicious gossip columnist in Sweet Smell of Success. A Lehman novella was the source for a Lehman-Clifford Odets screenplay.

Julie Andrews sings "My Favorite Things" in The Sound of Music, the most popular musical film of all time. Lehman adapted.

before except as a writer. I can tell a poorly directed scene on the screen when I see one, particularly if it's something I've written and I know what's supposed to be there and isn't there. I know that the director didn't get the point or he went past the point and missed it. But directing is really something else. I wonder why directors aren't satisfied to be directors, why they have to be the auteurs of the films, as though being a film director isn't a fantastic art in itself.

Question: How do you set about adapting a work—a novel or a play—to the screen?

Lehman: I read it a lot. I read it a lot and start getting feelings about it and then start making notes. I usually try to figure out where's the movie in this? Where's the screenplay? If the novel is 850 pages and you know a screenplay is anywhere from 115 to 160 pages, what aspect is dramatizable? What aspect of this novel will be the drama that's going to be up there on the screen? For example, for *Portnoy's Complaint* I made the decision that the drama is really Portnoy finally meeting the Monkey and what happens with the ill-fated love affair, with enough up front to show how Portnoy gets to be the way he is at thirty-three or thirty-four. But that was really not the way the novel was constructed.

Each particular film project is different. In *From the Terrace*, for example, the gargantuan task there was to decide which part of the protagonist's life to dramatize. The novel starts with his antecedents and covers them for a few hundred pages. Then he's born, he grows up, becomes successful, and he goes on to late middle age at the end of the novel. I made the decision to start with him coming home from the war as a young man and took him up through his leaving his wife. But there was much more up front and in the rear in the novel.

For *The Prize*, I just horsed around with the novel completely. I decided not to do a serious picture and wound up with a sort of road company, not-first-rate *North by Northwest* kind of film. My first picture, *Executive Suite*, was based on a multi-character novel. I combined some of the characters into one person. I threw out some of the characters, and I invented other characters.

Question: How do you start on paper?

Lehman: Usually I do some sort of outline for myself. Sometimes I write a long treatment before going into the screenplay. Quite often I take filing cards, and I write out a scene on each one. I tack them up on a wall and step back and sort of look at the movie. I may notice that I've got twenty-four cards in act one and six cards in act two and fifteen in act three, and I realize that something is a little out of balance. Sometimes I take a card and say, wait a minute, this scene would be better over *here*. I just move the cards around. It's a way of getting a visual look at a film

when I don't even have a film. It has always helped me to use these cards.

Question: The cards must have come in handy for a diversified movie like *North by Northwest*.

Lehman: For part of it. But I only knew, after many story conferences with Hitch, where that movie was going up to a certain point. Beyond that it was simply making it up as I went along and not knowing how it was going to work out. I knew we wanted a chase across the faces of Mount Rushmore, knew that we wanted a lodge somewhere behind Mount Rushmore, and knew that would be the place where the heavies would be taking off for parts unknown. But a lot of the screenplay was just written from day to day, with shots in the story arm from Hitch. I ran into a total block at about page 125, while the crew was building sets and Hitch was storyboarding the movie with art director Robert Boyle. I hadn't the faintest idea what the last twenty minutes of the picture would be. That's a whole story in itself, two weeks without a word getting written and a starting date looming. And this was the first draft, mind you.

Question: So you didn't write a treatment first?

Lehman: No treatment. A partial outline, some cards now and then.

Question: Is your tendency in screenwriting to give a lot of camera directions?



Lehman: Most directors don't like anyone to tell them how to shoot a picture. Some writers, particularly writers who have written a lot of movies and maybe directed a few, can't help but put down certain things that come to mind because the ideas feel so right. It would be so great to suddenly shock-cut to a close-up of a knife, say, so they put it in. The director, of course, can ignore it, or he can say, "Hey, that's a hell of an idea. I'll use it." Robert Wise has shown considerable openness of mind toward suggestions written into the screenplay by this screenwriter.

What is not stressed often enough—in fact, I've never seen it stressed—is that a lot of people *read* a screenplay. It isn't something that just winds up on the screen eventually. A lot of people read it—agents, directors, actors, producers, financiers—and it should, if possible, read well. It should, if possible, give the flavor of what it's trying to do, without really becoming novelistic. It's not good to put in things that absolutely cannot be photographed—a lot of interior monologue of the character that can never be put on the screen. But bear in mind the reader.

Question: Could you talk about the transition from being a writer who dealt with producers and directors to being a writer-producer yourself, dealing with so many other people? How did it come about?

Lehman: I had been around moviemaking quite a few years—around the set a lot. I remember writing the last scene of *Sabrina* the day after it was shot. Billy Wilder, the director, said, "What the hell are you doing at the typewriter?" I said, "I want to put that scene in the script." We were writing at night and shooting the next day all through the movie. I was around on that picture all the way. On *North by Northwest*, I was still writing the script during shooting. I remember having terrible script fights with Cary Grant up in Bakersfield while the crop-dusting sequence was being shot. I was around during most of the shooting of that picture, too. I finally decided that I was sick and tired of having somebody else always taking over my baby. So I wound up producing *Virginia Woolf*, and Mike Nichols promptly took over my baby.

Becoming a producer is a false solution to a writer's ego problems. But I did have a lot to do with what I think were important decisions. If I hadn't been the producer of *Virginia Woolf*, I guarantee you that Mike Nichols would not have been the director. That's without a doubt. I guarantee you that Elizabeth Taylor would not have been in it, nor would Richard Burton have been in it. I guarantee you it would have been done in color. It might still have been a terrific picture and won twelve Oscars instead of five. Who knows? But because I was the producer, I was able to make certain decisions which had an effect on the picture. If you are only the screenwriter, you have no control over who directs it, who's in it, who rewrites it or

who doesn't rewrite it. You don't have much control over anything. But I've been lucky with a lot of pictures that didn't produce, let's face it. Most of the best pictures that you see in a list of my credits are pictures that I did not produce. But producing is a little bit of an ego trip, too.

Question: Speaking of *Virginia Woolf*, it's often forgotten today what a bold picture it was for its time. Everyone then felt that the play could never be made into a film because of the frankness of the language.

Lehman: That's true. Nobody apparently wanted to do it as a film. I had read it in manuscript form right after it was produced on Broadway, and, after having read it, resolved



Barbara Harris as a fake medium and William Devane as a suave kidnapper in *Family Plot*. Lehman's screenplay for Hitchcock transposed a British novel to California.

that I would never see it. I didn't want to be caught in a theater exposed to that play, for some reason which it would take a psychiatrist to unravel. I resisted seeing the play for a year and a half. My wife finally induced me to see it when it came out here to California, merely to see what we all knew was a great play. But no one in Hollywood would go near it. I saw it as a play and was knocked out by it, but I did not walk out of the theater saying, "I've got to do it as a movie." I didn't even think of it as a movie.

I was writing *The Sound of Music* at this time, and Abe Lastfogel, president of the William Morris Agency, kept calling me about *Virginia Woolf*. I told him not to bother me, that I loved it as a play but that I had not said I was interested in it as a movie. He said, "Well, for your information, I'm going to New York, and I'm going to talk to

Edward Albee and see if he's willing to sell the play outright with no controls, no holds barred." I said, "You do whatever you want. It's your business, Abe, not mine."

A month later he came back from New York and said, "Well, Albee is willing to sell the play." I said, "That's very interesting." He said, "You know, there's only one person in this town who's ever wanted to do this as a picture." I said, "Who's that?" He said, "Jack Warner." I said, "You've got to be kidding." He said, "Nope. Jack Warner was knocked out by the play. He's never stopped talking about it. I'm going to him after getting a waiver from the Dramatists Guild and try to sell him the play outright. Now, do you want me to tell him that you're interested in writing it and producing it?" I said, "Nosir-ee. You sell that play to Jack Warner if you want. That's your business. If Jack Warner says that he's interested in having me write and produce it, then I'll be forced to answer these questions. But right now I'm not a part of this at all."

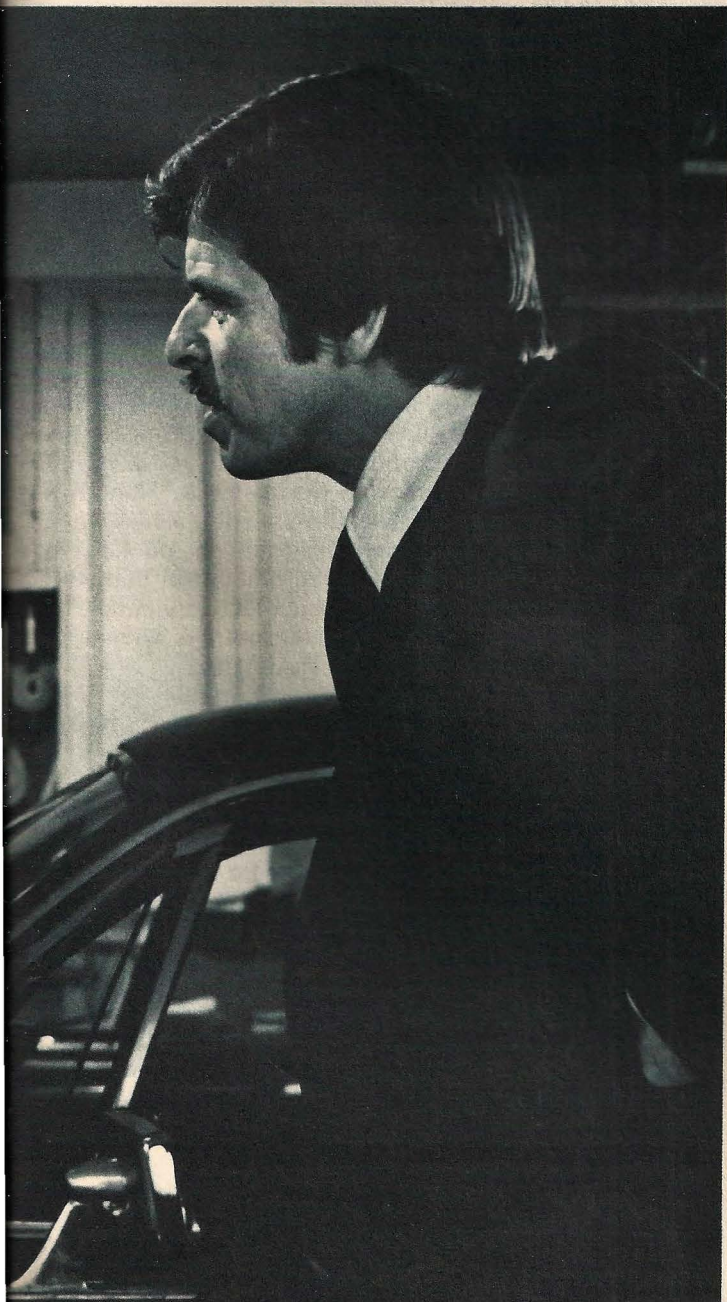
Question: Warner, of course, had been trying to get you over to Warner Bros. as a writer-producer.

Lehman: But there had never been any projects I was interested in doing at Warner Bros. Finally, Lastfogel sold it to Warner and immediately called me and said, "Jack Warner wants you to write and produce it." I had put off this moment for many, many months. I said, "Well, it looks like I'm going to have to make a decision." I went off and agonized for about five days, because I knew why nobody wanted to do it—there was no way to do it. How do you do that as a movie? But it was such a great play. How do you say no to the opportunity to bring that to the screen?

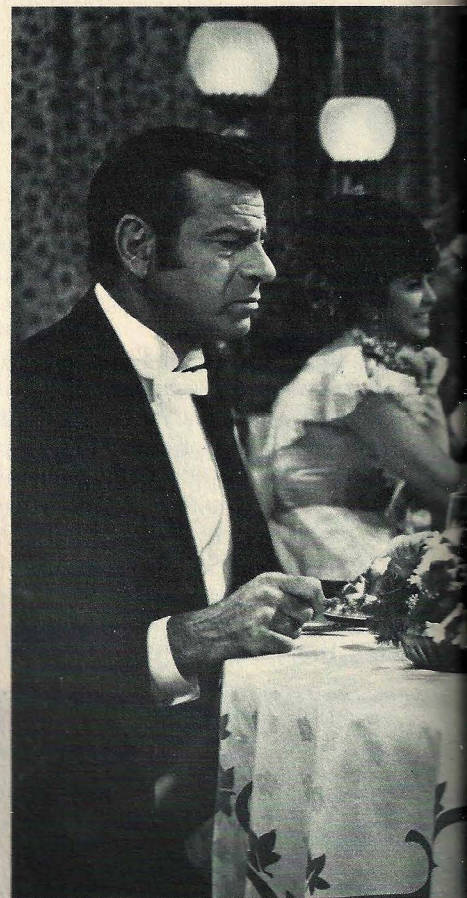
I said, "I'll do it on one condition." I met with Jack Warner and all his executives, and I said, "The only condition on which I'll do it is that I have the right to select the cast and the director and everyone else of importance." Jack agreed to that, provided that he had the right of approval of my selections. That's the way it worked.

But there were many, many battles. Jack wanted me to use George Cukor, who had just won an Oscar for *My Fair Lady*. Patricia Neal told her agent that she'd fire him if he didn't get her the role. Burt Lancaster called me at home and said he insisted on being on my list. Directors wrote to me. Everybody wanted to do *Virginia Woolf*. Meanwhile, I hadn't the faintest idea of how to do it as a movie. I started fooling around with it and gradually realized that one of the ways you do it as a movie is that you don't change it too much. Somehow it holds together. Of course, you can't do it all in one living room, as the play was done. But there is so much dramatic power to it that you don't try to bring in the cavalry and have musical numbers and mob scenes. You just do it.

One of the biggest battles that Mike Nichols and I had



Louis Calhern, Paul Douglas, Fredric March, Barbara Stanwyck, William Holden, and Nina Foch form the all-star cast for Executive Suite, Lehman's first screenplay.



with the powers that be at Warner Bros. was over our insistence on doing it in black-and-white. They wanted it in color, of course. I don't know how we ever won that battle, but we did. Also, Mike was insistent on shooting no cover words for the so-called bad language. We didn't have a rating system at the time, and it's hard to believe that in 1966 the picture was sold with the proviso that the manager himself was responsible for not letting anybody under the age of eighteen into the theater. It was the only way we could get a Legion of Decency seal of approval for the picture. We know now how tame the picture is.

Question: Was it your idea to open up *Virginia Woolf* to include the outdoor scene and the roadhouse scene?

Lehman: You know, it's really hard for me to recall. Gene Kelly once said that I have a very convenient memory, that I like to remember the good things and forget the bad things. I know damn well that when I decided to do *Virginia Woolf* as a motion picture, one of the things that had bothered me in the play was that Nick and Honey hung around there all night. Why don't they go home? What are they taking all this guff for? I was resolved that I would find some way to get Nick to make the decision, "Come on, Honey, let's get the hell out of here." That worked, that forced us to go. Yes, I'm sure that that was my idea—I think. But I think it was a good one. The roadhouse, the parking area was a good Fellini scene, with the lights hitting Pete Wexler's lenses. I didn't like the unnaturalness of the totally deserted roadhouse, but we

tried it with some people around and it just didn't work.

We danced around many different versions, Mike and I, after he came on the picture. For a short while he wanted the whole thing to take place during some kind of bonfire celebration at the college. The students would be dancing around a bonfire, and it would be a crazy kind of night, you know, like a panty raid night. It took a lot of doing for me to talk him into the fact that this damn thing doesn't work unless it's happening while the world sleeps. Nobody's up. This is all happening during those terrible hours when most people are asleep. Somewhere I think he publicly, in print, thanked me for having talked him out of that. But there is a version of the script in which there are people all over the place. We went through all the motions of trying to open it up and make a so-called movie out of it.

Question: Were you concerned about some of the long monologues in the film? For example, Burton's lengthy recollection of the boy who shot his parents?

Lehman: I was nervous about the whole movie. I really was. I knew that it was a very risky venture from the outset, because it is very much talk and very little so-called cinema. Yet I remember how totally moving that monologue was on the stage. I think that was something I was not nervous about.

Question: It was probably appropriate, given the controversial nature of *Virginia Woolf*, that the set was closed off to the press and the public.



Walter Matthau is dismayed by Barbra Streisand's table manners in Hello, Dolly! Lehman has no peer as an adapter of popular Broadway musicals for the screen.

makeup to make her look older than she was—she was thirty-three and we wanted her to look about forty-eight—would go right down the drain in color. Inasmuch as the movie played totally at night, black-and-white seemed right for the emotional tone.

Question: Was Haskell Wexler your first choice as cinematographer?

Lehman: There's a little story behind that. Wexler and Harry Stradling, Sr., were strongly considered by Jack Warner and me before Mike came on the picture. Jack assured me that Harry Stradling was great with first-time directors. He had worked with Elia Kazan on his first picture, and I was becoming sold on Harry Stradling, which put Pete Wexler in the number two spot. When Mike arrived in town I said, "Mike, Jack Warner wants me to use Harry Stradling." He walked right past me to my desk, picked up the phone, called Sam Spiegel in New York, and said, "Sam, what do you think of Harry Stradling? He is? Right." He hung up the phone. "Get him. He's the best."

We got Harry Stradling, and Mike and Harry did not get along well. Mike had definite ideas as to how he wanted the film to look. He kept taking Harry to screenings of *8½*, *A Place in the Sun*, this picture, and that picture. Harry was very nice about it, but he was irritated because he knew that Mike had never directed a picture, and *he* had just won an Academy Award. It came to the point where Mike came to me and said, "You've got to get together with Harry Stradling and see if you can't make him like me."

I had a meeting with Harry Stradling, and he said, "Look, I like you guys. Don't worry. I'm going to make this picture look so lousy you'll love it." Everything seemed all right until Harry did a camera test of the set. Pretty important, because we were going to be on that damn set for a long time. We went to a screening room, and we saw the set on the screen. It was overlit. Immediately Mike made a few very pertinent comments. I think I made a very few pertinent comments, too, but I will only swear to the fact that Mike did. In fact, I didn't *have* to make the pertinent comments, Mike made such telling ones. Harry Stradling just got to his feet and said, "I'm too rich and too old to have to put up with this kind of shit. Find yourself another cameraman." He walked out of the room.

Question: When did this happen?

Lehman: This was just a few days before shooting was to begin. I sat there in a panic, and then I called Jack Warner and told him what happened. He said, "It doesn't surprise me. I saw this coming all along. I knew it." I called Warner's associate, Walter MacEwan, and said, "Walter, we've got to have Pete Wexler." He said, "He's on location with Irv Kershner. They're just getting ready to start

Lehman: It would have been a circus otherwise. You would have read stories about how much champagne the Burtons were or weren't drinking, or who hit whom, or who swore at whom. I felt that this had a chance to be a distinguished film, and I didn't want it to be a circus or a Liz-and-Dick-do-it-again type thing. Jack Warner and I and the head of publicity at Warner Bros. came to a decision that the set would be closed entirely and locations would also be closed entirely. Smith College agreed to let us use the campus with the proviso that no members of the press would be present. So I had some pretty tough tasks as the producer, like taking Tommy Thompson, the motion picture editor of *Life* magazine, and hustling him off that set, or taking a *New York Times* film writer and telling him that if he wasn't off the set in five minutes we would have to shut down. I was very embarrassed that I had to tell him this. I escorted him to a nearby cocktail lounge and tried to make him happy again.

Question: You've said that you insisted on black-and-white for *Virginia Woolf*. Why?

Lehman: We felt that the dialogue would *read* differently in color, that the characters themselves would read differently emotionally in color. We had a chance to see how right we were, because at the time ABC was shooting a documentary special on Mike Nichols, which was never released. They were shooting it in color while we were shooting in black-and-white. I got a chance to see Elizabeth Taylor, as Martha, in color, and everything changed completely. We knew that all our efforts with wig and

shooting *A Fine Madness*." I said, "We have to have him." He said, "Just go home. I've got your telephone number. Don't worry about a thing." I said, "What do you mean, don't worry about a thing? We start shooting on Monday." He said, "Go home." That night he called me and said, "I think it's OK. Pete wants to read the script."

Pete came to my office the next morning—I think he flew in from wherever they were going to shoot the other picture—and he went into the next office and read the script. He was in terrible turmoil, because he wanted to do both pictures. Anyway he wound up doing ours.

Question: And he wound up winning an Academy Award for his work.

Lehman: Ironically, one of the many problems we had on the picture was night-location shooting. Even as we had our troubles, Mike and I used to say to each other, "The ridiculous thing is that Pete's going to win an Oscar for this." What got on the screen was truly fine, and it did win an Oscar. But we had a lot of trouble, and Pete got into a very angry mood about directors after that film. He resolved he wasn't going through that any more, and he became a director himself.

I forgot to tell you. Long before Harry Stradling came on the scene, I went to Paris to see the Burtons, to get their approval of cinematographers. I presented Pete Wexler's name to them, and Burton flew into a rage. He said, "My face is pockmarked like the craters on the moon, and Wexler will have every one of them on the screen." He would not accept him. But months and months later, in our crisis, he *had* to accept him.

Question: You've talked elsewhere of the importance of the right environment for a writer. What do you mean?

Lehman: John Houseman, my first producer on *Executive Suite*, once told me that as far as he was concerned his sole function as the producer was to create a climate in which I would feel safe and encouraged and enthusiastic. That may be the last time I felt that way, and it was quite a few years ago. Now, what did he do? When he liked something he was very enthusiastic about it. A nonwriting producer could be helpful by knowing how to be constructively critical without destroying your confidence, without threatening your sense of yourself as a writer. Very difficult, very difficult. In fact, it's one of the most difficult things in interpersonal relationships.

Creating a feeling that, come hell or high water, this picture is going to be made—that's another important thing to inject into the aura of a writer. You always have that feeling—this thing is never going to be made, it's never going to happen. I must say Hitchcock is great at creating the right climate. All during *North by Northwest* and *Fam-*

ily Plot I had the constant feeling that we were just wasting our time, that we were playing a game, just talking, that there was never going to be a movie. I had the feeling constantly, and tried to quit quite often. But if there is someone you are working with who tolerates your anxiety and makes you feel that whatever you are doing is really for the screen and not for the shelves, that makes you work all the better and harder.

Question: Even in an ideal environment there should be room for criticism, of course.

Lehman: Of course. I don't mean to say that it's better to have someone around you who doesn't know what to criticize. But it's better to know what to criticize and know how to deliver that criticism in a way that won't undo the joint venture in some way or interfere with the writer's effectiveness. Enthusiasm is a great quality, and an environment that values what you value is important, too.

Question: Are you working on anything now?

Lehman: I'm on page 690 of a novel. It's a big, global, action, suspense type of thing that's very far removed from me personally. I constantly wonder why I want to express all this. I think one of the reasons we're getting so much of this type of subject matter on the best-seller list and on the screen and on television is not necessarily because readers and audiences want it, but because writers seem to be living out their fantasies in their writing more and more, dealing with essentially impersonal experiences. This all may simply be an expression of what's going on with those neurotic people known as writers.

Question: Or an expression of what's going on in today's world.

Lehman: That could be. I read synopses of all the novels that are submitted to the studios. It's just incredible how almost every single one of them has nothing to do with ordinary living. It is all action in high places, thrillers, CIA, assassinations, and has nothing to do with the day-to-day, interpersonal, human problems of life on earth. I can remember when writers wrote what concerned them personally, as fine novelists like Saul Bellow still do. They used to reflect their own private view of life. It must be very difficult for a novelist today to put a year or two of his life into writing something that is true to him but predictably noncommercial in the world of paperbacks, Hollywood, and the smaller screen. The pot of gold is so huge these days. Then, too, maybe writers are having trouble confronting their own lives and therefore look elsewhere into the fantasy world of high-level intrigue. Who's to say that readers and audiences aren't doing the very same thing?

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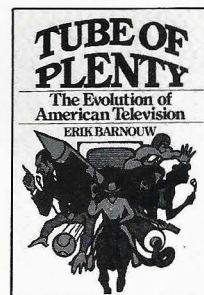
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THE SECRET OF THE DESERTED MEADOW

Car culture in the movies

Smith: How did you come up with the idea for this film?



Bishop: I was talking with a friend about making a film like *Deliverance*, only instead of moonshiners we'd have witches and instead of canoes we'd use motor homes.

Smith: Motor homes on a wild river?

Bishop: Of course not. We'd turn the river into a highway.

Interview with Wes Bishop, producer-coauthor of Race With the Devil

Julian Smith

18 JANUARY 1976—Mexico

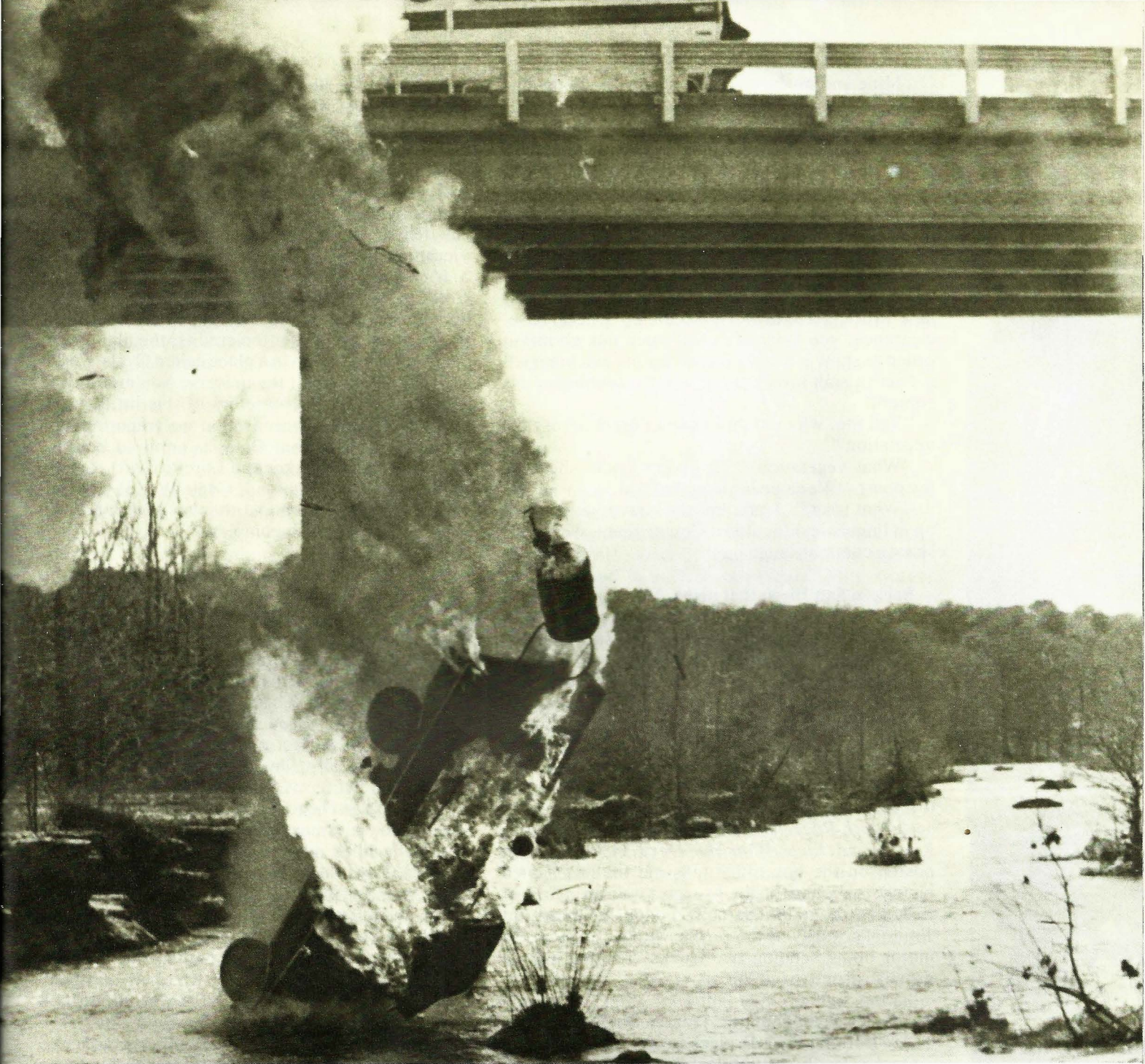
We're down in Baja with Jim, a neighbor from New Hampshire. We've brought him to a place with a singing name, Cantamar, and a stretch of sand dunes on the road to Ensenada. Along the line of wind-shaped dunes commanding a view of the nearby ocean, hang-gliders stand ready. It is the riders on the wind we've come to see, but we forgot this is Sunday. On the long sweep of sand below us, young Americans tear back and forth on and in an assortment of two-, three-, and four-wheel trail bikes and dune buggies, for this is the traditional day for their sport, the day celebrated in Bruce Brown's *On Any Sunday*, and they have come here to do things they can't do at home.

Descending, we have a few beers and watch our

countrymen at their unmuffled pleasure. This is not the poetry of Brown's semidocumentary ode to biking with its slow-motion images of Steve McQueen looking almost thoughtful as he lofts his bike, or with its soft telephoto images of distant shimmering bikes glimpsed through flowers, or with its romantic music replacing the usual defective garbage disposal grinding chicken bones clatter. This is the real thing.

And yet, the bike riders around us seem to be having the terrific time promised by *On Any Sunday*—all except one, a sullen young woman on a Honda three-wheeler. Trixie the Triker, we call her. She rides alone, caught up in an exercise of some personal demon. Aimless, awkward, she ap-





proaches the slopes at random angles, often stalling, then abstractedly kicking her machine back into life. Sitting bolt upright, dainty, aloof from both machine and landscape, she passes us at close range, and we try and fail to make eye contact. Her state does not seem drug-induced, nor does she seem brain-damaged. She seems angry, as though she is grinding the anger out against the sand.

Later, while Jim and our kids walk along the shore looking for shellfish, Monica and I walk the cliff line above them. A few minutes into our walk, we come around a lonely dune to find a brand-new Chevy pickup (four-wheel drive, power steering, power brakes, high axle, and off-road tires) parked on the very lip of the land. It has been backed in

through the fragile sea grasses and ice plants that hold the dunes in place against the Santa Anas that would blow them back into the ocean. A set of fresh tire marks leads in through a maze of old tracks showing where many another adventurous traveler has chewed his way in. Curious, I get into the cab—the odometer reads less than two hundred miles. The owners have lost no time screwing things up with their new toy.

Monica, meanwhile, has spotted a family surf fishing below us, and we go down.

“That your new Chevy?” I ask the middle-aged man standing at water’s edge drinking coke and bourbon (one I detect from the color, the other from his breath).

Race With the Devil: A pickup truck crashes in pursuit of a motor home.

"Mine and my boy's." He nods to a young man fishing farther down the beach.

Behind us, the man's wife is stretched out in a folding lounge chair, listening to a transistor radio. While we talk, Trixie the Triker, who turns out to be the daughter of the family, wheels up to Mom. (Monica will later point out that these folks are probably doing passingly well by their own lights—all participating in their pursuits in proximity if not actually together.)

After I talk to the daddy about the specs on his new truck (weight, displacement, wheel base, clearance, you know, the stuff men talk about) in order to show a proper regard for his machinery, I get set to sink my harpoon into the blubber of his content.

"Tell me, why did you have to drive across the vegetation?"

"What vegetation?" he shoots back, shedding my point. "We came in along the road."

"What road?" I ask, but the conversation dries up in linguistic difficulties. Countrymen, we do not share a common language.

Back in San Diego that night, Monica, Jim, and I go out for dinner. Afterward, passing go-go clubs, topless bars, pawnbrokers, nude massage parlors, self-proclaimed dirty bookstores, a lonely Turkish bath, a registered historical landmark showing X-rated movies, cardrooms, tattoo parlors, and a blood bank, we wind up at the Plaza, a small park separating the tinsel temptations from the real world. Side by side are two all-night theaters playing triple features. One offers a clutch of kung-fu dramas, the other has a trio of car movies I want to see: *Death Race 2000*, *W.W. and the Dixie Dance Kings*, and *Race With the Devil*. The schedule posted on the box office tells me the last-named picture is about to begin. I suggest we pop in for just this one to complete our long day of slumming, but Jim looks warily at the poster with its images of a motor home sending two trucks crashing and its promise of auto excitement:

Peter Fonda * Warren Oates

Are Burning Their Bridges and a Lot of Rubber
On the Deadliest Stretch of Road in the Country

"No, I don't want to see that. It's the one about the middle-aged guys who run away from a bunch of Satanists in the boondocks."

"Just our kind of people, Jim. Come on—let's spend a few bucks."

But Jim is adamant, and we drive off to Fashion Valley to see *The Man Who Would Be King*. It's been a long day, and one by one we fall asleep.

A few days later, after Jim flies home to New Hampshire, I go downtown to see all three films in a six-hour binge at a grand cost of a dollar. Right now I want to talk about *Race With the Devil*.

Jim, I dedicate this reading of the film to you, our local state legislator, a member of the Audubon

Society and the Sierra Club, the kind of dedicated conservationist who stops just short of stringing a piano wire in his woods to keep the snowmobile population down; you are the audience this film *should* have but doesn't—for you could cheer the real good guys. I hope, after you read this, you'll do your duty and drop in on a showing or two so you can deliver, during the final credits, the public service message this film invites.

Here goes:

Before the credits comes the definitive road-picture image: a two-lane blacktop stretching away into the distance. After the credits, the film proper opens in San Antonio in a place called Cycle World. This name says it all: the universe as a motorcycle supermarket. The proprietors of this little world, Peter Fonda and Warren Oates, are preparing for a long-awaited vacation. Oates is annoyed because their wives (Lara Parker and Loretta Swit) are late: "You know how girls are." Cycle World. Generalizations about women and the way they hold men back. The evocation is complete.

Cut to race track. Peter Fonda and other bikers are going round and round in their circular pleasures. A huge motor home drives across the track and onto the infield. This is the real star of the film: a thirty-two-foot Vogue, the same make that stars in the already defunct television series, *Three for the Road*. (Actually, Jim, this is not the kind of thing I know as a matter of course—after seeing *Race*, I went out to San Diego's biggest motor home and rec-vee lot—a salesman there, a fellow named Joe Mountain, filled me in on the public image of the Vogue.) Oates takes Fonda on a tour of their new home, pointing out the four-track stereo, color television and antenna, built-in bar, four-burner stove, double sink, two ovens (regular and microwave), master bedroom, bath. In the bath he finds Ginger, Fonda's wife's cute little dog. Oates is outraged: "That means we gotta stop all the way up, doesn't it?"

His objection is symbolic rather than practical—the senior master of Cycle World, embarking on a journey of liberation, has no patience for anything, female or canine, that might slow him down. Lest this point seem forced, note that the "official" plot synopsis in the pressbook lists their destination as "the ski slopes on Pikes Peak," the classic get-there-or-bust way station of westering pioneers.

The camera follows the motor home through heavy San Antonio traffic past the Alamo into rush-hour, freeway traffic, then into open roads, until it is traveling alone. At this point, according to the script that the coauthor-producer Wes Bishop kindly supplied me, "They are really in the open now, free at last." Free from what? Why, from traffic. But note that the traffic sequence begins with a prominent visual reference to the Alamo. Though Bishop became impatient when I asked



him whether he intended the Alamo to be “read” allegorically, and though he denied any purpose other than a reminder that the film is set in Texas, I choose, as an intelligent viewer, to bring my sense of history into play.

An analogy is in order: Even as I write these words, *Race With the Devil* is playing all over Southern California (and, I assume, the nation) on a double bill with *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. This particular pairing only reinforces my suspicion about *Race* as peculiarly American. Both films deal with “freedom” and mobility—in each case, adventurous Americans “escape” from the world that has been closing in on them and into a place they have no business being—and each film ends with our heroes besieged in their personal Alamos and about to be permanently immobilized.

But back to the point at which the script indicates they are “free at last.” Fonda, the younger of the men and in need of being initiated into the mysteries of freedom, suggests they head for the mobile home park at Hidden Valley and its seductions: showers, pool, restaurant. “Look, are you kidding?” snaps Oates. “Those parks are nothing more than tract homes on wheels, you know? That’s why we took our vacation in January, old buddy, to get away from the crowd. We got a thirty-six-thousand-dollar motor home here.... We don’t need anything from anybody—we are self-contained.”

The isolato. The great American loner. Natty Bumppo on the path. Huck Finn on his raft. Ahab aboard his Pequod. Portnoy locked away in the family bathroom. Free at last. But what an odd perception of independence. Has he forgotten he needs tires, gas, oil, spare parts, a highway system, and a sewer into which to pump his crap?

Before I can answer this question, Oates has spotted a dirt trail snaking off into the scrub. “Our private road to seclusion,” he exults. They wheel the seven-and-a-half ton *Freiheitswagon* deep into the countryside, across a rocky stream bed, and wind up in what the pressbook synopsis calls “a deserted meadow.” Now, I’ve heard of deserted wives and deserted parking lots, but never of a deserted meadow. Who, exactly, has deserted this meadow? Is the synopsis writer suggesting that the meadow is somehow a loose fish, that it is up for grabs?

In any case, it isn’t a meadow they park in—it is a grove of what seem to be oaks on the banks of that stream they crossed. Directly across the stream is a solitary giant, a dead tree. What force has blasted it? Don’t they know better than to camp in oak groves? Haven’t they read *The Golden Bough*?

“Absolutely beautiful,” say the wives. “So peaceful.” But, of course, the boys want the stir of life, want something going on. So they get down their trail bikes and have a race.

“You’d think they could get away from their bikes for five minutes on a vacation,” says one wife to the other, smiling fondly as the boys roar up and down, butchering the peace with a hellish racket.

To understand the extent of the boys’ fascination with bikes, Jim, you’d have to see *On Any Sunday* and hear the narrator’s ode to the likes of Mert Lawwill, a top-rank “professional” motorcycle racer: “He travels over seventy thousand miles a year with...his helper.... They don’t stay in motels, but drive twenty-four hours a day, stopping only to eat and refuel. Mert is totally dedicated to his profession. He works at it seven days a week. He doesn’t have time for any outside interests. Motorcycle racing is his life. He grossed about fifty thousand dollars the year before and ended up with about twenty thousand dollars after expenses. That’s good money, but not what it should be for the skill, knowledge, and dedication he has.”

That night, as the boys sit outside drinking and reminiscing in the romantic Texas dark, the girls prepare for bed inside. “You know,” says Mrs. Fonda to Mrs. Oates, “it’s the first time they’ve really relaxed in such a long time.” Mrs. Oates, Loretta Swit, smiles understandingly at the fullness of the moment.

The boys’ relaxation—some would call it drunkenness—is in celebration of their professional success. The fact that they can afford a vacation after a lustrum of hustle, after five years of living in motels and racing their bikes on flat tracks, is a sign of their arrival in the promised land. More particularly, the Vogue objectifies this victory: “We have put it together, baby,” Oates croons to Fonda. “We have put it together.” And both cast fond glances over their shoulders at the gleaming baked enamel and vinyl solidity of the motor home behind them.

Poof! Flames erupt at the base of the sinister dead tree across the stream. The boys pass binoculars back and forth to watch the start of what promises to be an orgy as nubile young women shed their hooded robes.

“Let’s take a closer look,” suggests the leering Oates, but Fonda stays him with the first and only reminder that the world is not the completely open place they have taken it for: “Maybe they own this place, you know?”

Through their binoculars, they witness what seems to be the sacrifice of a naked young maiden. When Loretta Swit comes to the door to call them in, she spoils everything (you know how girls are) by shouting. But the boys pile into the motor home to begin their “race with the devil,” while the devil’s servants give hot pursuit. (Actually, the film offers no clear or compelling evidence that these dimly glimpsed figures are witches or Satanists. They could simply be wood nymphs, dryads, or members of a local wife-swapping club. Oates and Fonda and their wives *assume* that they are Satanists. And the title tells us they are. But I’m willing to reserve judgment.)

Despite getting bogged down in that stream they crossed so briskly on their way in, and despite





having to fight off male figures bathed in the lurid glow of their tail lights, the masters of Cycle World make it to the relative safety of the office of the local sheriff (R. G. Armstrong), who apologizes for taking so long to get to them and blames the trouble on hippies. The quicker members of the audience recognize his as the mustache and mouth below the mask of the chief Satanist. The sheriff and Deputy Dave, played by Wes Bishop, take the boys back to the sacred grove and give them the old runaround, trying to talk them out of believing what they saw.

Finally together again and back on the road, they stop for the night in the safety of a motor-home park on a back road to Amarillo (you'd never know from this film that there are federal highways in Texas—it's two-lane blacktop all the way). But the park is not safe, nor is the friendly new neighbor from the Roadmaster with the real wood paneling, nor his long-suffering wife who must wax the paneling every week—walls, ceiling, the whole place. Nor is the gap-toothed filling station attendant holding the ill-mannered cat. They're all witches, don't you know?

That night, after a pleasant dinner with the neighbors from the Roadmaster, they return to find Mrs. Fonda's little dog dead, the trail bikes smashed, and huge rattlesnakes in their imitation wood paneled cupboards. They flee the park, spending the night on the road. In the morning, they try to call the highway patrol, but find the phones mysteriously out of order.

Now begins what we've all been waiting for—the vehicular violence that the poster promises—and to which the whole first half of the film has been a mere preface. A tow truck, moving van, and pickup try to hem in the motor home, but Fonda outrides them, causing all three to crash in variously spectacular ways.

Then Oates takes his turn, as a new set of pursuers closes in. Fonda, working from the roof of the careening Vogue, uses a shotgun, flaming canteens of gas, and a strategically dropped trail bike to knock out three more vehicles and make the score six to nothing. It's a *Straw Dogs* on wheels.

Eighty-two miles from Amarillo, thinking themselves home free, they pull off the road at sunset and settle down to a pitcher of very dry martinis. "Hey, everybody," says Fonda. "Brighten up. It's all over."

Poof! Flames explode and out of the dark come the sheriff, the cat-loving mechanic, the prissy librarian, the friendly neighbors with the waxy build-up, and all the strange folks they've encountered.

The happy couples who had set out so hopefully from San Antonio on Friday are now stilled on Sunday. Not just any Sunday, one hopes, but their last. The images slow down to freeze frames, the camera pulls back to show the Vogue surrounded by a ring of witches and fire.

The audience is stunned by this sudden reversal of fortune, but I am delighted. I cry out, in my best "Twilight Zone" voice, the film's secret message.



*The climax of Race With the Devil:
The satanists surround the motor home
with a ring of fire.*

*The "boys" (Warren Oates and Peter
Fonda) race their motorcycles near the
mysterious deserted meadow.*

This will teach you lords of the wheel not to go invading our sacred groves with your motor homes and trail bikes! This public service announcement has been brought to you by your local Sierra Club.

Message? Dare I find a message? After all, didn't Warren Oates say in press releases that *Race With the Devil* "doesn't say much in terms of its message. But that's all right with me"? Yes, he did—and that's all right with me, too, but I choose to find a message, even if the creators did not intend one. And why should they? After all, as the executive producer was quoted: "We've got witches, a human sacrifice, car chases, Country and Western music, and a Hitchcock-like twist at the end." Who needs messages?

I do. It is my vocation to find messages where none are intended. The unintentional message is, for my purposes, the most valuable kind. Listen in on my chat with producer Wes Bishop:

Smith: I felt sympathy for the devil worshippers, or whatever they were, and was pleased when they caught the motor home. Did you intend the audience to feel this way? (It's a stupid question, and I know it, but it gives me a disarmingly naive quality.)

Bishop: Absolutely not. I don't know how anyone could see it that way. But you're free to, I guess. The film is completely accurate in what it says about witches....There really are such things as runes.

Smith (never for a moment doubting the existence of runes): How did you come up with the idea for this film?

Bishop: I was talking with a friend about making a film like *Deliverance*, only instead of moonshiners we'd have witches and instead of canoes we'd use motor homes.

Smith: Motor homes on a wild river?

Bishop: Of course not. We'd turn the river into a highway.

Well, Jim, old buddy, go to the movie, whisper its message into the ears of the people around you, hand it out with the popcorn. And this summer, we'll all go out to the woods during a full moon—or to a handy deserted meadow—and churn up a spell to turn Wes Bishop and his friends into kumquats. That'll teach them to go around turning rivers into highways. ★

(This is the second in a series of articles.)

Julian Smith is the author of *Looking Away: Hollywood and Vietnam*.



In the live theater, printed programs came into international use about a century ago. When the movies, in their first desperate striving for respectability, attempted to emulate the theater in every possible way, it became a frequent practice for a special performance or a special film to be given the added distinction of a printed souvenir program. In most countries such film programs remained the notable exception; but, from a very early period in German-speaking Europe, they became the rule for an audience passionate for documentation.

At first produced fairly haphazardly by the producing and releasing firms, by 1916 programs were being prepared in systematic series by special publishing houses. The first regularly issued programs appear to have been the Austrian "Wiener Kino Bibliothek" series, initiated by the Kivur Publishing House in 1916. A simply produced single-fold of cheap paper, with only an occasional block illustration on the cover, and inside a cast list and synopsis, the Kivur series lasted until 1930, and comprised around 12,000 titles.

Meanwhile, in Berlin, the show business newspaper, *Berliner Illustrierter Filmkurier*, began its own series of programs in 1919. The paper appeared five times a week as a small, four-page edition; and the first programs were offered to readers gratis. Publication was fairly spasmodic, however, and a mere eighty or so programs had appeared when inflation and an acute paper shortage caused the *Filmkurier* to abandon the project. The series reappeared in 1924, though the programs were now sold through separate subscription, or for a few pennies a copy in the theaters. The series was eventually to extend to 3,518 separate programs, and outlived *Filmkurier* itself, which ceased publication in 1939. The last *Filmkurier* programs appeared in 1945. The creator and original publisher, Paul Franker, outlived both his creations: He was recently still living in Ger-

many, in his nineties.

The *Berliner Illustrierter Filmkurier* programs were uniform in format. With few exceptions they ran to eight pages, 8¾-by-11½ inches, finely printed in photogravure on paper which was inclined to rot if it was not used and "aired" regularly, producing the legend among collectors and aficionados that programs die if they are not loved. Early in the series, the designers perfected a characteristic montage style which, at its best, equaled the work of the great Soviet montage artists and, at its worst, managed to make every film, whatever its subject, look the same. At least once (probably with subvention from the distributors), *Filmkurier* programs burst into color, for Henry King's *Ramona*, and, once, into full gold, for Greta Garbo in *Camille*. Occasionally the graphic style was varied from the ordinary montage cover. The distinguished painter Käthe Kollwitz designed the cover for *Mother Krause's Journey to Happiness* on which she had been an adviser; and the program for Fritz Lang's *Spione (Spies)* made use of the striking motif used for the advertising posters, intriguingly signed "F.L."

The importance of the programs, though, lies not in their decorative quality and nostalgic period evocation, but in the enormous fund of documentation they contain. The extent of the credits varies: Sometimes sketchy in the early days, for the later films they are usually exhaustive. Plot synopses are detailed and remarkably reliable. Even in the final, wartime days when the *Filmkurier* programs were reduced to a tiny single-fold, the credits, cast, and plot were never stinted, although it was necessary to print them in minuscule type.

The *Filmkurier* series had its rivals, though its quality was never equaled. From 1927 to 1932 there was the *Licht-Bild-Bühne* series; and from 1934 to 1944 *Das Programm von Heute* issued about two

Sixty Thousand Programs

A reflection of an era, a nostalgic period evocation, pre-World War II cinema programs from Berlin and Vienna are also a unique source for film history.

David Robinson



thousand titles. Until 1942, this series offered the extra bonus of a high-quality, picture-postcard portrait of the film's star slotted into each program.

In 1930, a Viennese publisher began an Austrian series of *Illustrierter Filmkurier* programs, clearly modeled on the German original, but approximately half the paper size. Like its German counterpart, the accuracy of the documentation published in the programs was exemplary. The Viennese *Illustrierter Filmkurier* series had achieved more than 2,070 issues when the Anschluss of 1938 brought it to an abrupt halt. After this, the Berlin edition served for both Austria and Germany.

The Austro-German passion for programs survived the war. The Viennese *Illustrierter Filmkurier* series was resumed in 1946 and continued publication for ten years, to be succeeded by the *Neues Film Programm* which still continues publication after more than 7,000 issues. In Germany a new series, *Illustrierter Film Bühne*, lasted from 1947 to 1969, and published more than 8,000 programs. East Germany only began to publish the *Progress* film programs in 1952; some 2,500 issues had appeared before publication ceased in 1974.

In the course of sixty years, then, the German-speaking countries have published a total of approximately sixty thousand individual film programs, recording a vast bulk of information, much of it systematically recorded nowhere else. After 1930, the *Berliner Illustrierter Filmkurier* could be relied on to detail almost a hundred percent of all films shown in Germany—which included a great many international productions as well as German films. Before then, perhaps eighty percent of all material shown was recorded in the programs.

For decades, however, the material was hopelessly scattered, and inaccessible. There was no comprehensive collection. Not even the film archives had been able to establish a complete set of

the *Berliner Illustrierter Filmkurier* series, though there was (and still is) a legendary collection in the possession of a Berlin pastry cook, who likes (it is said) to flick over the leaves as he is kneading his dough through the night so that a lot of the pages are now inseparably gummed together. As dispersed ephemera, the film programs of sixty years were little better than junk.

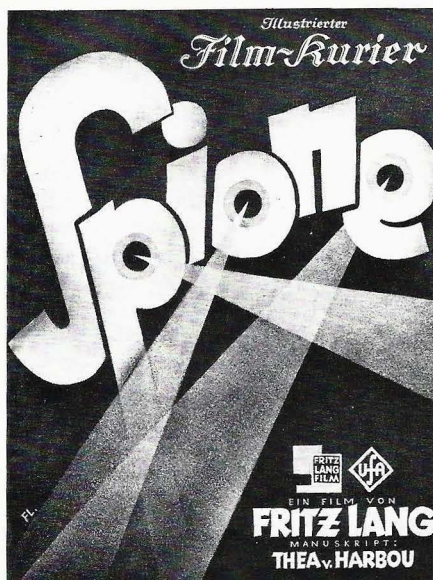
That this vast documentation has in fact now been rendered accessible and usable is due solely to the efforts of the Viennese film historian Herbert Holba and his collaborator Peter Spiegel. With a demonic energy and determination, Holba set out to assemble the largest single holding of film programs. Beginning in the early sixties, Holba and Spiegel succeeded where every archive had failed in establishing complete runs of the major series. They discovered that the apparently meticulous numeration of the series could be misleading; and they were the first to assign a considerable body of unnumbered programs to its proper chronological place in the series.

The real breakthrough was the publication of the first catalogs in 1972. These astounding achievements of documentation list the programs in numerical order, giving German release titles, original titles, nationality, production date, and director. The main catalog is indexed by all titles, and by directors. Even without the related programs, this listing provides an incomparable source of information on two decades of German and international film production.

The apparently dry listings of the catalog conceal not only the range of information they are capable of yielding, but also the grave problems the catalogs encountered in identifying foreign films from German titles, and, in the early programs, the most meager supporting information. Holba cites as an extreme example of the problems of identification,

Germany's film program booklets often had striking covers like the one at left by the noted artist Käthe Kollwitz. Below: The cover for a Fritz Lang film emphasized the auteur.

Besides German films, the programs also documented imports, but the titles sometimes bore no connection to the originals.



program no. 182, a film identified only as *Das Rätsel der Affenschlucht*, with no credits at all to give a clue to its origin. The synopsis gave no more help than the titles. The stills showed mountain scenery with animals and only two actors. A long process of elimination followed. National types seemed to exclude America. National landscapes excluded Scandinavia. Pictorial style and the taste for location filming seemed to exclude Italy and Germany. France had seemed unlikely until Holba recalled that Alfred Machin and Henry Wulschleger were active around this time with animal films.

During that period, documentation on Machin and Wulschleger films was almost nonexistent; and, in any case, the film hardly had an identifiable story. But the stills showed only two actors, and films with so small a cast are rare. A long search finally turned up a Machin and Wulschleger film with only two players, listed in the Czech archive catalog. By chance, only two months later a French periodical published a study of Machin and Wulschleger that confirmed Holba's conclusions. The title, appropriately enough, was *L'Engime de Mont Agel*.

American series' shorts provided their own nightmares of identification. The German titles assigned sixteen Hoot Gibson Westerns or Al Christie two-reel comedies, for instance, have no connection with the original American release titles; stories and stills are practically indistinguishable; and even the release date in Europe cannot be taken as any guide to the production date. Holba says that the task would nevertheless have been much simplified in this area if *The American Film Institute Catalog 1921-1930* had been available to him at the time he was working—though even that would not have solved every problem, for German film programs record obscure American productions which have eluded even that meticulous work.

Other mysteries were more easily solved. One instance sheds fascinating sidelights on film exploitation and film taste in Germany in the 1920s: A program for a 1927 film called *Weingeister*, with a German cast, was supposedly directed by René Clair and Walter Schlee. Yet Clair at no time worked in Germany. The stills and synopsis solve the mystery: A slim framing story is used to introduce a subplot in the form of a dream; and the dream is *Le Fantôme du Moulin Rouge*. Clair's film was evidently regarded as too avant-garde for the German audience of the time, just as *Caligari* eight years before was "explained" as a dream.

The programs can clarify a lot of obscure points of history. Raymond Durgnat's research for his recent book on Jean Renoir was, for instance, defeated by *Die Jagd nach dem Glück*. He concluded that it was "a somewhat shadowy enterprise....If it was ever finished, it was either never shown or shown once only in Berlin in 1930." The existence of a program not only shows that it was finished and released, but preserves the unusual credits (script and direction by Lotte Reiniger, Karl Koch, and Rochus Gliese, with photography by Fritz Arno Wagner and trick work by Reiniger and Berthold

Bartosch) and cast (Alexander Murski, Anny Xells, Bartosch, Renoir, and Catherine Hessling); and provides a detailed synopsis of a whimsical tale of love in a carnival, the landlord of which was played by Renoir.

The Holba catalogs are a unique source of information on the "lost" cinema of the Third Reich, and the practice of multiple language versions of films in the early days of sound. The policy of making several versions continued much longer and more successfully than is generally supposed. The catalog records well over two hundred examples between 1929 and 1939. One of the last, major, prewar, foreign-language-version films was Jacques Feyder's *Les Gens du voyage*, which appeared in a German version as *Fahrendes Volk*, with Hans Albers playing opposite Françoise Rosay, in the role created in the French version by André Brule, and Camilla Horn as the juvenile lead. Even later, throughout the war years, there were frequent German versions of Italian successes.

Techniques for these version films varied from simple dubbing (introduced at a very early stage) to simultaneous production of several versions with casts wholly or partly different, as well as different directors or dialogue directors. Less often, alternative language versions might be made subsequent to the principal versions: Sometimes the dividing line between version and remake is thin.

The programs reveal historical curiosities. *The Great Gabbo* was dubbed: One of the parts was spoken by Greta Keller, no less. Victor Sjöström directed a simultaneous German version of *A Lady To Love*, *Die Sehnsucht einer Frau*, with a cast which was wholly changed (Joseph Schildkraut replacing Robert Ames as Buck) except for the two principals—Vilma Banky and Edward G. Robinson, who repeated their original roles in the "hundred percent Deutsch Sprache" version.

A still more curious instance is *Die Grosse Fahrt*, a German version of *The Big Trail*, directed by Raoul Walsh. The cast is entirely new and entirely German; and the film is significantly scaled down, with an emphasis on close-ups, evidently to save the expense of filming a second cast in the expansive location settings of the original.

Sometimes foreign-language versions were so changed from the original that they became virtually new works. Which of the MGM revue films, for instance, was transposed through the addition of new star "turns" into *Wir Schalten um auf Hollywood*? Alongside Buster Keaton, Joan Crawford, Ramon Novarro, Norma Shearer, Adolphe Menjou, Wallace Beery, and John Gilbert, appear European favorites like Heinrich George, Dita Parlo, Nora Gregor, Oskar Strauss...and Sergei M. Eisenstein.

Skimming through the glamorous period photomontages of the programs, you are hit by familiar

names, even though they are sometimes slightly disguised. Dr. Otto Ludwig Preminger appears as the director of an Austrian production of 1931, *Die Grosse Liebe*. As Mihály Kertész, Michael Curtiz is first recorded in the programs as the director of *Die Slavenkönigin* (1924). Detlef Sierck (later Douglas Sirk) graduates from writing to direct *April, April* in Germany in 1935. Other writers include Kurt Bernhardt and one Billie (sic) Wilder, whose name appears on the credits of Ernst Laemmle's 1929 *Der Teufelsreporter*. A barely recognizable young Marlene Dietrich appears on the credits and in the stills of the programs for *Café Electric* (1927) and *Prinzessin Olala* (1928).

The programs vividly reflect the political turmoils of Europe between the wars. When W. K. Howard's *A Ship Comes In* (1928) was released in Germany, the dangerous identification of a character as "a Communist" was altered, as the plot synopsis reveals, to "an anarchist." Under the Nazis, the official prohibition of work by Jewish actors and directors was naively circumvented: The credits of Wilhelm Thiele's American production, *Jungle Princess*, were simply altered to credit the direction to E. Lloyd Sheldon.

Occasionally comparison of different editions of programs will bring to light revisions of films for censorship or propaganda purposes. The *Illustrierter Filmkurier* program for Fritz Kirchhoff's *Anschlag auf Baku* (1942) gives the synopsis of a spy story set in 1919, with the popular star Willy Fritsch as the hero who foils the dastardly efforts of the English agent Percy Forbes. Evidently between the initial preview and the preparation of the program in the *Programm von Heute* series, it had been thought necessary to strengthen the propaganda content. The later synopsis reveals the addition of a framing story, set in 1940, with the original 1919 intrigue now seen as flashback. The dastardly

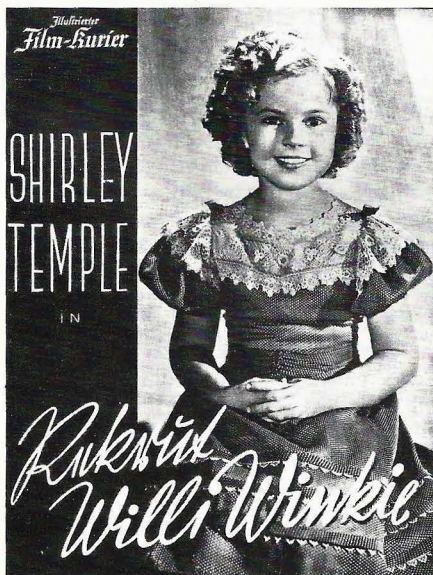
Percy Forbes is shown to survive twenty-one years; and his unmasking becomes part of the modern, framing story. This enables the synopsis to warn us: "Today English agents are again working in the underground."

The programs reveal vividly, too, the way in which foreign product was gradually pushed off the German screens as the thirties progressed. At the start of the decade, the powerful industrial alliances of the American majors allied to evident public enthusiasm for American product meant that a remarkable variety of American films appeared in German cinemas. After 1933, importation began, at first gradually, to diminish, though nothing short of the war itself was able to affect the popularity of Ford, Hawks, Garbo, and Shirley Temple with the German public (and, presumably, their notoriously film-crazed rulers). The last American film to be released before the declaration of hostilities was Charles Barton's 1936 *Murder With Pictures* and before that DeMille's *The Plainsman*.

Holba and his colleagues—self-styled "factophiles"—are indefatigable, having glimpsed the treasures of documentation the catalogs can yield. The preparation of one of their catalogs might well seem like a life's work; but they have just completed a new catalog, due for late 1976 publication, of the East German programs since 1952, which will provide an unparalleled source for films from the whole Communist world, including, for instance, the considerable output of films from Vietnam. They have also announced that a new catalog of the postwar *Film Bühne* series will appear in a series of monthly installments, published by their own newly established publishing house devoted to scholarly research monographs. ■

David Robinson is the film critic for the *Times* (London.)

Familiar names and faces sometimes appear in the programs. But some are barely recognizable. Right: A young Marlene Dietrich in a 1927 film.



It took the whole week, but on the last day of the Sun Valley conference, "Western Movies: Myths and Images," the inner structure of the affair was suddenly revealed to me.

On that morning, I rose early and got to the principal auditorium in time for the eight o'clock showing of Howard Hawks's *Red River*. I myself was to go on at ten with the last formal talk of the conference, and I already knew what I was up against in following that particular act.

What I was up against was formidable, all right, including the greatest cattle drive in movie history, a full-scale stampede, a memorable range burial, and a classic—even mythic, as we were all saying by then—confrontation between John Wayne and Montgomery Clift. My own flash of insight came when Wayne pushed his cowhands to get the great herd across the Red River at dusk instead of waiting 'til morning. He gave his reason to Clift: "Keep 'em plumb wore out," he said, "and they won't go riding away."

Of course. That's what the conference range boss and head wrangler, Jim Belson, was doing with us. Every day started with the eight o'clock movie, followed by the ten o'clock lecture, followed by discussion, after which it was time for the noon movies, which continued through five or six o'clock simultaneously with the two o'clock and four o'clock lectures, panels, or seminars. It all began again at eight in the evening with more talk of various kinds, continued into the ten o'clock movie, and closed with movies at midnight. To see and hear everything was, by definition, impossible; the schedule would keep you going from, say, 7 A.M. to around 2 or 3 A.M. We were "plumb wore out" and little inclined to go riding away, despite the availability of horses and some spectacular mountain trails. Kept firmly on schedule, we were lucky to get lunch, let alone a lull for lolling.

Despite an initial panic, the immersion schedule made symbolic as well as actual sense. For one thing, you got to see an awful lot of Western movies and hear an awful lot about them. And with a little attention to time, you could often do both, since the best part of the meetings tended to come first—in the formal talks—and the best of the movies last—in the grand climaxes, confrontations, and resolutions. Besides, if you couldn't walk into a

Focus on Education

Western halfway through and figure out rapidly what had gone on before, you had no business being at the conference.

The immersion schedule of the conference duplicated, after all, the total immersion of the movie experience, as opposed to the proscenium frame of the drama, the living-room distraction of the already deliberately fragmented and interrupted television. Immersion: those born-again Christians have something there. There was another intimation of immersion at the conference, a tendency, perhaps a temptation to see movies themselves as immersed in the Western theme, to see the Western as by far the most important development of the American movies.

The Western was important, of course, as any number of speakers made clear. For the old-timers of the industry, people like Tim McCoy, Blanche Sweet, Iron Eyes Cody, Chief Dan George, and, the surprise of the meeting, the fabled "Baby Peggy" of the silents, the Western was all-important. All of them had had some experience in the cattle country or the Indian country before they joined the movies. One of the most effective papers at the conference was that of "Baby Peggy," now Diana Serra Cary, recalling her father's career in both the silents and the B-Western talkies of the 1930s prior to what everyone agreed was the "renaissance" of the form in 1939 with *Stagecoach*. John Ford, in fact, emerged as the real, if absent, hero of the conference.

Cary maintained that those early "picture-cowboys," some 250 of them, gave the silent Westerns and the B-budget talkies an authenticity that has since vanished. Her contention was well demonstrated in any number of the early movies on view. The band of cowboys, in pursuit or in flight, flowed over the plains and the rugged country like the wind. Each rider seemed part of his horse, each horse a moving feature of the terrain, all in a unity of motion that you just don't get with Clint Eastwood, who was at Sun Valley and who certainly has other professional abilities.

Incidentally, in the context of the conference and because Eastwood was present along with his new Western, *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, it was easy to see his *Dirty Harry* movies as shining examples of what the conferees were calling "urban Westerns." In the original *Dirty Harry*, after using direct methods to rid the community of a dangerous criminal, the detective found that he had offended the community: His profession of protecting the community had ironically made him unfit to be a member of it, a constantly recurring theme in Western gunfighter movies. At the very end, Harry threw away his badge of office, as Gary Cooper did in *High Noon*. In that direction, of course, lies madness: Not only are there the urban Western and the cops-and-robbers Western, but indeed the *omnium Westernum*, which you had to fight all week long at the conference if you ever wanted to see another Truffaut.

The people who put this all together were Jim Belson and his wife and assistant, Janice Belson; plus Howard Lamar, Yale historian who specializes in the American West; George Gund III, film importer and festivalian; and the incomparable William K. Everson of New York University, the School of Visual Arts, and the New School, who, twelve hours after the conference ended, was still showing silents from his unparalleled collection to all who would watch, of whom there were plenty.

The money for the conference, \$30,000 each, came from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Levi Strauss, makers of "the pants that won the West." (Being both a word man and a Levis man, I was delighted to learn from the company's representative three things I never knew: that "denim" comes from "de Nîmes," originally a serge made

Continued on page 72



*This group on location for **The Exquisite Sinner** (1926) includes director Josef von Sternberg (with cane).*

Emigré Germans gave Hollywood many of its techniques, but Hungarians and Austrians brought warmth and sophistication. Part II of

John Baxter **The Continental Touch**

There is a hint of the hand on the shoulder, the gun in the back, in all German film. Not only that of the Nazi period (much of which is as gluey and sentimental as operetta); but German cinema from its earliest days has shown a cold calculation in all its artistic decisions. Its eye looks so deeply into the soul that what began as analysis becomes accusation.

Germany gave American film many of its techniques, not to mention some great artists. But it is hard to think of those men and women with warmth, or to speak of the German influence on Hollywood in the same breath as that of the ebullient, cheerfully nepotistic Hungarians and Viennese. A movie truism of the thirties isolates the contrast: "Begin with one Hungarian on a unit and soon you have all Hungarians. But begin with all Germans and soon you have just one."

From the earliest days of American cinema, Ger-

many was Them—the competition, the leaders, the enemy. Many producers secretly rejoiced at the outbreak of the First World War and the blockade that surely must snuff out the industry. But the war, which silenced the French and British cinemas by cutting off their continental markets, far from extinguishing German film actually encouraged it. Deprived of outside products, all central Europe turned to Germany for entertainment. Scandinavia, Poland, Hungary, and Austria clamored for films, and the reputations of stars like Asta Nielsen and Pola Negri were made.

In 1917, General Erich Ludendorff suggested that the many competing film companies of Germany, remnants of successive waves of expansion by the French and Danes, be amalgamated into a single large studio and theater chain over which the government, through a generous investment, would have substantial control. The result was Univer-

Jeanette MacDonald as Sonia, Maurice Chevalier as Danilo, Minna Gombell as Marcelle in Lubitsch's *The Merry Widow* (1934).

sum Film A.G.—UFA—which was to have a major role in world cinema.

With the German government owning a third of its capital, UFA had a mandate to take over the industry, but so lively was German film after the war that competition increased. In 1911, Germany had 11 film studios. In 1922, after UFA had been operating for five years, there were 360. But it was UFA, with its big budgets, its chain of theaters, its laboratories and studios, but most of all its roster of great artists that drew the filmmakers and performers of all Europe to its home in Potsdam, outside Berlin, and to the suburb of Neubabelsberg, where the studios were soon surrounded by mansions as lavish as those of Hollywood. (These houses provided suitable accommodations for Stalin, Truman, and Churchill when Potsdam became the location for their 1945 summit conference, the stars having fled, taking all their possessions with them, as the Allies advanced.)

Shrewdly, Paramount and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer moved in to buy UFA, and in 1926 the studios gained major control. Half of UFA's theaters would thereafter show Paramount and MGM films, while the personnel and product of UFA would flow inexorably to Hollywood, creating much of the Hollywood style that became the hallmark of American film.

A year after the "Par-UFA-Met" agreement, Paramount gave the direction of UFA to Erich Pommer, producer and skillful publicist of *The*



Cabinet of Doctor Caligari and a key figure in twenties' and thirties' cinema. With American money, Pommer reorganized the company, reinforcing the unemotional professionalism typical of all German enterprises. British director Michael Powell visited Neubabelsberg at that time and still remembers "the efficiency—those dust-free oiled floors. All UFA was like that."

The polished plant merely reflected a rigid internal discipline. Arriving there in 1929 to make his first German film, *The Blue Angel*, Josef von Sternberg was astonished when told by Pommer that "not only would he have to know precisely what scenes I contemplated photographing, the angle of the camera and its exact range, but that he would have to be so informed every morning." Sternberg successfully rebelled against this regime, but few German directors would have thought the restrictions odd or even unwarranted. They found Hollywood's casual system and lack of respect for the director profoundly disturbing. The UFA director was addressed with elaborate courtesy on the set, and often wore white gloves, a symbol of his disdain for manual labor. Erich von Stroheim introduced this fashion to Hollywood, Sternberg slavishly followed it, and it was further popularized by William Dieterle. In *Sunset Boulevard*, Billy Wilder parodies the style when Stroheim sits down to the organ and launches into Bach, still wearing his white gloves.

The Viennese and Hungarians slipped easily into the Hollywood routine, but Berliners constantly fought against its rules. To most European artists, Berlin was the center of the world. "To go to Berlin," writes political historian Peter Gay, "was the aspiration of the composer, the journalist, the actor: With its superb orchestras, its 120 newspapers, its 40 theaters, Berlin was the place for the ambitious, the energetic, the talented. Wherever they started, it was in Berlin that they became, and Berlin that made them, famous."

A star director from such a society understandably found Hollywood provincial and often absurd—his autocracy increased, as did his eccentricity. Dmitri Buchowetzki, a Russian who had made his reputation in Berlin with epics like *Danton*, required that his crew present him with a baby pig



*Erich von Stroheim, who appeared in and directed **The Wedding March** (1928). The two-part film was severely edited by Paramount.*

Pola Negri, shortly after her arrival in America. Her reputation had been made in German films during World War I.

on the first day of each new film, and Pola Negri wouldn't work if there was a cat on the set. (On her first day in a Hollywood studio, someone—could it have been her arch rival Gloria Swanson?—released dozens of them.)

Generally the technicians accepted such egocentricity, but they could revolt. Imported by Carl Laemmle on the strength of his polished German melodramas, the fat, if not always jovial, Paul Leni found American performers too bland for his taste and resolved to get better reactions from them. He arrived on the set of *The Chinese Parrot* with a huge gong, which he kept by his chair and struck with nerve-racking effect whenever he wanted the cast to register shock. The crew could live with piglets and white gloves, but the gong was too much. After one morning they issued an ultimatum—either the gong went or they went.

An offense against Hollywood's curious codes of morality and superstition could also end one's career abruptly, no matter how highly valued one might have been at Neubabelsberg. Danish director Benjamin Christianson swore that Hollywood bias and superstition destroyed his chances of success. It all began when two of his assistants on *The Devil's Circus* committed suicide within a week of its completion.

"It did not look too good," said Christianson. "For some time I was put in cold storage, and Lionel Barrymore put some light on the matter for me. 'You can surely understand that no one wants

to work for anyone whose assistants take their lives.' I also added to my unpopularity by having my shoes soled and heeled. No one else did this; one *always* bought new ones when the old were worn out. In the end I got one of Hollywood's most well-known fortune-tellers at my throat. He told everyone they should keep away from me because I brought bad luck. Later I got to know the reason why he disliked me—I had bought an antique Chinese figure he had wanted himself."

Occasionally discrimination was less subtle. In 1939, E. A. Dupont, the director of *Variety*, slapped one of the Dead End Kids while directing *Hell's Kitchen*. Lewis Seiler replaced Dupont, who didn't work in Hollywood again for another eleven years. Unable to return to Europe, Dupont resourcefully set himself up as a talent agent, at which he had considerable success, and also edited a gossip, weekly newssheet, *The Hollywood Tribune*. Another German director, Harry Lachman, opened an antique shop when work became difficult—the need to succeed, ideally at the expense of others, seemed ingrained in their natures.

Carl Zuckmayer, having fled from his native Vienna, lodged in Hollywood and was promptly offered the job of adapting John Barrymore's 1926 hit *Don Juan* as a vehicle for Errol Flynn. Puzzled, he asked Fritz Lang, one of the most successful of transplanted UFA directors, for advice. Lang told him to grab it. Historical films, notoriously long in gestation, offered the prospect of indefinite em-



Fritz Lang

In Fritz Lang's films, the world was rarely what it seemed—it was like a Chinese puzzle box, with secret worlds hidden within, where the strings of power and influence were pulled, where evil dwelt, and sometimes good. Lang gave audiences the keys to unlock the puzzle long before his heroes found them, and the heightened tension, the anxiety generated by his taut, dark films, came from this privileged knowledge.

Lang, who died in August at the age of

eighty-five, was the most famous of the émigré directors who fled from Hitler's Germany to Hollywood in the 1930s. He was renowned for his silent films—*Dr. Mabuse*, *Der Spieler* (1922) and *Metropolis* (1926) among them—and for the psychological drama, the visual and aural intensity of his first sound film, *M* (1931).

What was remarkable was how swiftly he made his mark on American motion pictures. His first two Hollywood films, *Fury* (1936) and *You Only Live Once* (1937), expressed a unique vision of America in the Depression era, of persecution and flight, of violence and social conflict, that retains its power, and shapes

our image of those times.

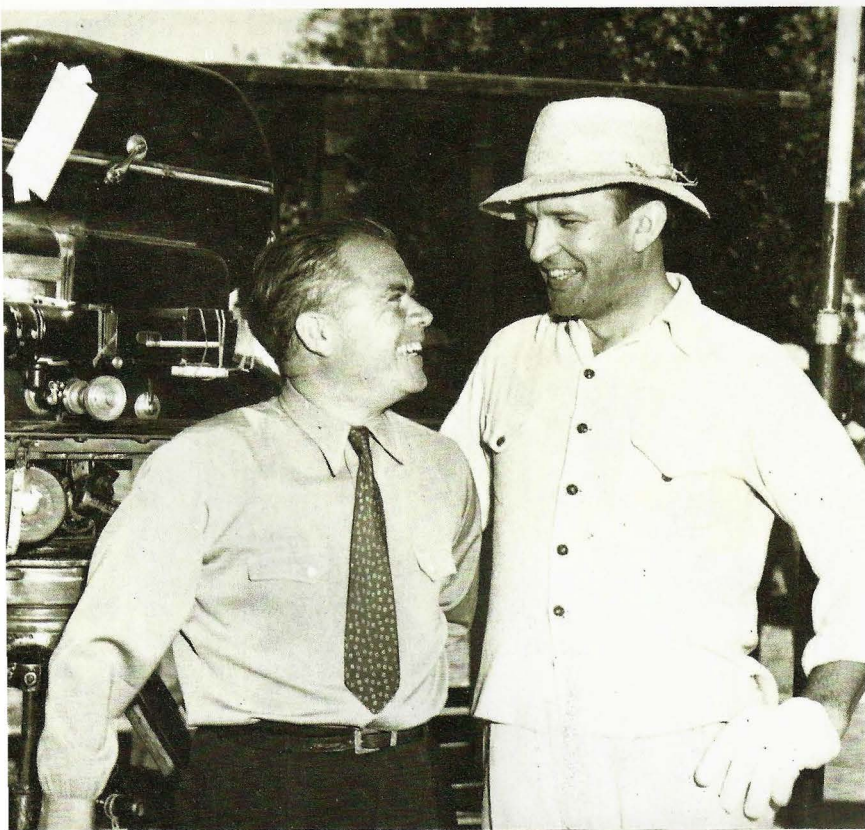
Over the next two decades, Lang directed more than twenty films in Hollywood, though none was to have the impact of these two. Still, in such films as *The Big Heat* (1953) and *While the City Sleeps* (1956)—said to be Lang's favorite among his films, and one that remains to be rediscovered—he again demonstrated his ability to unveil the ethos of an era. Or perhaps, more simply, the bleak, sinister, violent world of Lang's cinematic imagination continued to state a fundamental, if partial, truth about twentieth-century society and the human condition.

Robert Sklar

ployment and, more important in Hollywood, the acquisition of status. Zuckmayer considered. "I ought to rent a nice house and hire a Filipino couple as domestics, buy a car on installments, bring my family here, and be 'happy.' Besides, I would have a three-month holiday every year during which I could do my own writing." To Lang's astonishment and that of the German community, Zuckmayer refused the job and ended his time in the United States working on a farm in New England, alone with his integrity. The contrast between Vienna and Berlin could hardly be more tellingly conveyed.

The ultimate German émigré was Ernst Lubitsch, the most influential of all the European artists who came to Hollywood in the twenties, rivaled only fractionally by F. W. Murnau and the brilliant designer Hans Dreier who, as supervising

William Dieterle (right) and his cameraman. The white gloves indicated the director's disdain for manual labor.



art director of Paramount, fundamentally altered the look of American films. With his huge cigar, his mocking sneer, his heavily accented English, Lubitsch is the archetypal Berliner, just as Stroheim is the stock Prussian of the nineteenth-century novels. Their films enjoy the same contrast—Stroheim's Zolaesque, erotic but compassionate; those of Lubitsch self-indulgent, heartless, and sly.

Stroheim once isolated the essential difference between their approaches. "The difference between me and Lubitsch," he said, "is that he shows you the king on his throne and then he shows the king in his bedroom. I show the king in his bedroom first. In that way, when you see him on the throne, you've no illusions about him."

Critics cite the "Lubitsch touch" with approval. Maurice Chevalier confiscating a lover's pearl-handled revolver in *The Love Parade* and tossing it into a drawer filled with its mates; George Barbier as the cuckolded king of *The Merry Widow* trying to buckle the sword belt that belongs to his wife's much slimmer lover; the singer of "O Sole Mio" in *Trouble in Paradise* being revealed as the oarsman of Venice's garbage gondola—these are touches but little more. Where Lubitsch, Dieterle, Leni, Schunzel, May, Freund, and other German immigrants shine is in their unrelenting contempt for their subjects, their delight in revealing that the emperor is naked. It is a spirit that has its echoes in as modern a film as Fassbinder's *Effi Briest* and in the exercises of Straub. But Lubitsch is its true master.

One can see the hand of a master manipulator in Lubitsch's rise to fame. As a young actor he attracted the attention of Max Reinhardt, for whom he played a number of old-man roles, the same parts in which Reinhardt himself had gained his start as an actor. A series of low comedy movies led to prestigious historical epics like *Madame Dubarry* and *Anne Boleyn* (renamed *Passion* and *Deception* in the United States) which reestablished German film after the war and earned Hollywood contracts for their stars Emil Jannings and Pola Negri. Lubitsch followed later, making an unholy alliance with, of all people, Mary Pickford, who habitually

revolted against her image as “America’s Sweetheart,” only to flee to it when unpopularity threatened. For her, Lubitsch, with his imported screenwriter Hans Kraly, created *Rosita*, a superb Spanish comedy-drama.

Classing it as “an awful film,” Mary Pickford has tried with some success to have *Rosita* suppressed. But with Lubitsch’s arrogant direction, Charles Rosher’s razor-sharp photography—he had spent a year at UFA working with Murnau—and the sets of Toledo, designed by Danish art director Svend Gade, *Rosita* is actually an achievement of immense skill, as sly and sensual as any Lubitsch comedy. It also contains the ultimate “Lubitsch touch”: As two lovers kiss at the carnival, a second man stabs the first in the back and grabs the girl, who embraces him with even more passion than she did the first.

Pickford found Lubitsch incompatible from the start. His broken English, wisecracking humor, and inevitable cigar caused friction instantly, a situation not improved by the constant presence on the set of her watchful mother. Her mother had been scandalized when Lubitsch, explaining his first suggestion for her daughter, a film of *Faust*, told her how Marguerite “stringles” her baby.

“Not my daughter!” she said. “No sir.”

She also attended all screenings of the rushes and, after the first batch, hurried Mary into a corner for an urgent whispered conference. Apparently George Walsh, the husky young actor who played *Rosita*’s lover, wore such snug breeches that attention was drawn from little Mary’s face. Walsh spent the rest of the film in two heavy-duty athletic supporters. “In Europe, it would be wonderful,” Lubitsch mused, “but Mrs. Pickford says....”

Surviving *Rosita*, Lubitsch moved on to First National and then to Paramount, becoming for a time its head of production and unofficial leader of Hollywood’s foreign community. One by one his early collaborators disappeared. After an argument which ended in a fist fight, Hans Kraly’s Hollywood career declined abruptly. Lubitsch’s one film with Negri, *Forbidden Paradise*, flopped, and, like Jannings, with whom Lubitsch worked only on the indifferently received *The Patriot*, she returned to Europe and obscurity. During the thirties, after rashly criticizing a Lubitsch film, Josef von Sternberg found himself outmaneuvered at Paramount and finally denied work. He was, he said bitterly, “liquidated by Lubitsch.”

Even his old editor, Andrew Marton, later a distinguished director, left the Lubitsch orbit, though to this day he prefers to see only kindness, and not the handiwork of a diminutive Machiavelli. “Lubitsch was a marvelous, marvelous man. I remember when I was first engaged, my fiancée had to go to Europe because her mother was ill, and she went over on the same boat as Max Schmeling, the boxer. Next thing I know, all my friends send me clippings: ‘Who is the mystery woman Max Schmeling is visiting every weekend in Prague?’ I showed them to Lubitsch and said, ‘What should I

Rosita (1923), with Mary Pickford. The Lubitsch film had sets designed by Danish art director Svend Gade.

do?” Lubitsch answered, ‘I don’t know what you should do. I know what *I* would do; hop on the next boat and get her.’ I said, ‘What about my job?’ ‘It’s yours when you come back.’ So I went, and we got married in Vienna.

“On the way back to America,” Marton recalls, “I was staying at an obscure hotel in Berlin—an unknown person—when the largest electrical firm in Germany, Tobis-Klangfilm, rang and said, ‘Mr. Marton, would you consider staying here and working for us?’ They wanted me to train thirty-eight students in sound cutting technique, after which I would have the opportunity to direct my own films.” Marton took the job, not discovering until forty years later that Lubitsch had wired Tobis, “Andrew Marton is passing through Berlin. You couldn’t do better than sign him up.”

So Marton went the way of other collaborators, and Lubitsch, the last German, remained.

The Second World War swelled the German colony to the largest in Hollywood, partly through the efforts of Lubitsch, who headed an informal refugee committee, and Thomas Mann who, by virtue of his Czech passport and considerable standing as an author, enjoyed moral leadership of the émigré community. When the government refused to admit more than a fraction of the desperate fugitives recommended for visas by Roosevelt’s Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, MGM and Warner Bros. were persuaded to offer more than seventy “blank” contracts as proof that prospective





Lubitsch, with Charlotte and Mary Pickford, Charles Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks.

immigrants could work and would not be a burden on the nation. It was a laudable gesture, which, in Mann's words in a letter to Louis B. Mayer, "not only enabled these men to emigrate to the United States, but also gave them at least a certain breathing spell in which to secure the foundations of their existence."

A miscellaneous collection of Expressionist poets, playwrights, art historians, and political satirists thus found themselves in Los Angeles in 1940, drawing token salaries of \$100 a week and contemplating, without enthusiasm, movie careers. Of the group, only Bertolt Brecht made a determined, if cynical, attempt to succeed. In his poem "Hollywood" he commented tartly, "Every morning to earn my bread/ I go to the market where they buy lies." His only screen credit, for Fritz Lang's film of the Reinhard Heydrich assassination, *Hangmen Also Die*, was removed from the film, allegedly because Brecht, as a foreigner, would derive less benefit from it than his native collaborator, John

E. A. Dupont (in hat) directing *Love Me and the World Is Mine* (1928), with Mary Philbin and Norman Kerry.



Wexley. But he seems to have cared little.

Hollywood fame was not a goal any of the exiles wished to compete for. Ludwig Marcuse, summing up the general disenchantment of Germans in the studio writing departments, said they sat about "without a knowledge of English or of filmmaking, full of scorn for the industry—and also without even being asked to undertake anything serious. Physician and novelist Alfred Doblin was shown the story of *Mrs. Miniver* and asked for recommendations...and the studio received the grotesque answer that the material suggested a Chaplinesque treatment."

The studios did buy works by Franz Werfel, whose *The Song of Bernadette* was a considerable success for Jennifer Jones. (Werfel's friend and fellow Californian exile, Igor Stravinsky, agreed to write the score. Rejected by the studio, his themes became part of the *Symphony in Three Movements*, just as his unused work for *Commandos Strike at Dawn* became the "Three Norwegian Moods.") Lion Feuchtwanger, Bruno Frank, Martin Gumpert, Hans Habe, and Erich Maria Remarque, among other German writers, enjoyed movie sales, and two lesser talents, Hans Lustig and Georg Froeschel, had careers as screenwriters.

But for most of the émigrés, deprived of their beloved German language, exile was too miserable even to attempt the empire building of which Lubitsch had shown himself a master. Many existed on charity doled out by a committee headed by the wife of Bruno Frank. In January 1942, Alfred Doblin said his income consisted of \$18-a-week unemployment benefit and \$50 from Frau Frank. But still the proprieties were observed. "When we recently celebrated the seventieth birthday of Heinrich Mann at the house of Salka Viertel," Doblin wrote, "everything was in former times. Thomas Mann pulled out a manuscript from which he read his formal congratulations. Then his brother pulled out his paper and thanked him with equal formality. We sat at dessert, some twenty men and women, and listened to German literature."

Today, Neubabelsberg is the home of Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA), the socialized East German film industry, a wry joke on these rigorously aristocratic artists. The shreds of German influence linger in some of Hollywood's usages, but their greatest importance was in the introduction and perfection of technique, and that is a thing without soul. The Lubitsch touch is clammy today, and has a hint of the strangler's hand. It is no tragedy that a brighter, more optimistic spirit finally took control of Hollywood in the forties. It is to Budapest and Vienna rather than to Berlin that we owe the best of American film and its Golden Age. ★

John Baxter is the author of *The Hollywood Exiles*.

The Videotape Potential

Bruce Cook

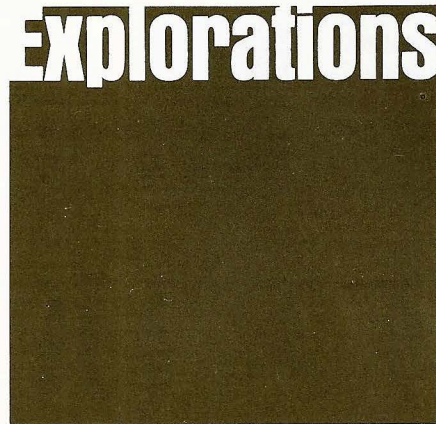
"Experience has shown that the most important results of any technological breakthrough are those that are not obvious." Thus the latest word from Arthur C. Clarke, science fiction writer, COMSAT theorizer, and space-age guru.

And not a bad rule of thumb it is at that when we consider the routine use to which videotape has been put during the nearly twenty years it has been in use. Even in the most practical terms, making it possible to broadcast "The Tonight Show" in four-hour delay is not exactly the ultimate achievement of videotape technology. It is now becoming evident to many that we are only beginning to understand what can be done with videotape—only now moving beyond the obvious. Who, for instance, would have been bold enough to suggest back in 1958 or 1960 that videotape might someday be used with anything like the freedom and flexibility with which film is used? That it might even be possible to merge the two in the production of theatrical features?

For years the only use to which videotape was put in television was as a kind of storage system for what were essentially live broadcasts. The network news could thus be held for delayed transmission. Syndicated talk shows could be shot and distributed on tape and then fit in anywhere on the local station's schedule. The soap operas, which to this day use precisely the same style and techniques as the old three-camera "live" shows of the fifties ("Philco Television Playhouse," "Armstrong Circle Theater"), could record their chapters day-by-day on videotape in order to have the luxury of working a few weeks to a month ahead. There was, however, no style developed that was peculiar to videotape, no real effort in New York or Hollywood to exploit its distinct and very real advantages.

It fell to the British to begin to develop a true videotape style—and that they did, more or less out of economic necessity. In the early sixties, the British Broadcasting Corporation and Instructional Television tape productions were as much "three-camera live" in technique as the rankest American soap opera. Most of these were plays written especially for television, with an eye toward limitations of cast and scene changes, very much in the style of the chamber drama of television's Golden Age.

However, the BBC undertook a series of ambitious adaptations from literary



sources during the mid-sixties. Among them was a series based on D. H. Lawrence stories and another from Arnold Bennett's "Five Towns" saga; but, of course, the best and best known of them all was the long running and generously budgeted production of John Galsworthy's "The Forsyte Saga." Clearly, with these something more than the ordinary small-cast, limited-set production was required. Film? Too costly. But the BBC set out to duplicate film techniques with tape and were modestly successful. It moved shooting into movie sound stages. It made an effort to achieve more fluidity and a greater sense of space—qualities we associate, whether consciously or not, with film.

And gradually, if somewhat timidly, the BBC began venturing to videotape outside the studio. For example, its series, "Jennie," based on the life of Winston Churchill's mother, included a good many exteriors shot on location. The results have been perhaps not truly movie-like, but rather like a photographed play that has been "opened up" with an establishing shot or two as prelude or interlude to the action.

This was about the level of videotape technique established in "The Adams Chronicles"—and a very high level it was for American television drama, which until then had attempted not much more

than situation comedies and late-night, low-budget mystery shows. Conventional wisdom had it that American television made greater use of film, because film was the American art form par excellence; on the other hand, the British, with their great theater tradition, worked best in a medium that is closer in some ways to live stage drama. And there is perhaps something to it.

James Cellan Jones, the British director of "Jennie," who has also directed film, has said that it is essentially the length of the takes possible with videotape (five to ten minutes or more) that distinguishes it from film and makes it, to some extent, superior. Long takes make extended rehearsal essential, and that, Jones found when he came over to direct two segments of "The Adams Chronicles," was what proved the big difference between working for the BBC and WNET.

"In America," he says, "they give you more time to shoot but less time to rehearse. Ideally, you should have both, but good rehearsal time is perhaps the most important for tape productions because it pays off tremendously in style and quality. It is where British television has the edge *at the moment*."

Videotape offers more than the possibility of long takes to make it attractive as a production medium. It is in many ways a revolutionary medium, one that synthesizes disparate parts of the filmmaking process into one or two steps. For example, it records image and sound simultaneously on the same tape, thus eliminating the need to synchronize and to mix recorded sound afterward, as must be done with film. Videotape offers the director the opportunity to see—and hear—precisely what has been shot through immediate playback of the tape. And because the director does much of his editing right on the console, switching from camera to camera as the tape is shot, postproduction time for videotape is cut dramatically: A rough cut of a feature-length show can be made available in three days, and the entire editing process can be accomplished in five. The total effect has been to reduce time and costs considerably, especially in postproduction, so that videotape is a much more economical medium than film.

This has made videotape especially attractive to all filmmakers who must work on reduced or tight budgets. Makers of

Continued on page 73

God bless the scholars. What would we do without them? Take, for example, that treasure trove, that storehouse of film knowledge, *The American Film Institute Catalog, Feature Films 1961-70*. It contains every conceivable fact you might want to know about every American and foreign film released in this country in the sixties. It's quite indispensable for the student, the scholar, the library—or for the perpetual pupil (like Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard*) who cannot sleep unless he knows how many Bulgarian movies were subtitled or dubbed into English in 1966, or whether Una Merkel was employed in 1970.

But for me—such good scholarly works notwithstanding—nothing means much unless it can be reduced (or elevated) to the personal. Who played Lotte Lenya's assistant pimp in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* is less important to me than what was I doing when I saw the picture in 1962, where did I see it, was I with someone, or was I alone?

The answers, which I alone know, forever color my memory of the movie, supplying a gauzy filter through which time, space, mood, and circum-

Benjamin



sized playing card to her brainwashed son, Laurence Harvey, but directly to me, sitting on the balcony of Loew's Paradise, counting the forever moving stars on the ceiling, just as I tried to count them when I saw my first picture there in 1931. It was *Skippy* with Jackie Cooper, and Jean Harlow headed the vaudeville bill on the stage.

And as Bette Davis, in hideous clown makeup, serves up the pet parakeet to the terrified Joan Crawford in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*, I can still recall my own horror as I tried to rise from the seat only to find that I could not. The weight of the liquor, tranquilizers, and despair chained me there to the bitter end. Who needs to know the art director of these movies when I supplied my own art and atmosphere, through which I will eternally remember them?

In 1963, I entered the Institute of Living, a sober, academic-sounding name for a mental hospital in Hartford, Connecticut, where I would stay for the next fifteen months.

There, I could break down at leisure, and at \$300 a week (it's much more now) in the company of the

Bernard Drew

The life and hard times of a film critic in the turbulent sixties

stance have imposed a dimension no other moviegoer can experience. It has nothing to do with what Gavin Lambert did to Tennessee Williams's novel or what José Quintero's direction gave to Vivien Leigh's exquisite *danse macabre* through the gardens and gutters of Rome.

She was looking for death, and in that spring of 1962, so was I. In 1960, just before the *Catalog* commences, I had returned home after seven failed years in Hollywood, an alcoholic, dependent on pills, halfway into a mental breakdown—back to my parents' Bronx apartment and its banner proclaiming "Welcome Home, Our Darling Son" in ironic counterpoint to their averted eyes as their white hope stood there, like Willy Loman or Blanche Du Bois, with suitcases and a lost look.

How can any movie I saw between 1961 and 1963 ever be divorced from what and where I was when I saw it? Now, leafing through the two volumes of the *Catalog*, the pool of memory is stirred, the precise data in the books blur, to be replaced by images of my own: 1976 dissolves to 1962, and I am sitting alone in the Luxor Theater for a weekday matinee watching Warren Beatty snarl, "In five years, they'll find you on the beach with your throat cut from ear to ear," to which Vivien Leigh wanly replies, "In five years, that will be most welcome," to which I, drugged with gin and thorazine, add to myself, "All I ask is one."

And in *The Manchurian Candidate*, seen the same year, Angela Lansbury is not brandishing the over-



Farrow

wives, sons, daughters, and in-laws of the rich, superrich, captains of industry, and makers of destinies: fragile ladies and gentlemen who had found the duties of being chatelaines or scions in rotogravure mansions, to which all but the important were kept out, rather too much for them, or too little, or not worth the candle.

And so, in the company of these lost souls who had not the stamina, steel, or drive of their celebrated fathers, husbands, and uncles, who did not care or simply were too weak to take over the family business or stock exchange seat, I went to the movies every chance I could.

We chose mindless movies because we were mindless, or rum-soaked, or drug-addicted ourselves. We were moviegoers from Beverly Hills, Palm Beach, Westchester County, Dallas, Grosse Pointe, Westmount, and farther, shunned by the polite social world to which we were born or had risen, and had become a self-protective family of our own, sharing the nadir of our lives.

We would go to the movies any free time we had, but certainly on Sunday, in groups, disdaining such weighty masterworks as *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *This Sporting Life*. Suffering on the screen, no matter how elegant, was no longer a catharsis when no Dostoevskian tragedy could keep pace with what we felt inside. We chose Disney idiocies like *Son of Flubber* and *The Three Lives of Thomasina* and such others as *The Slime People* and *A New Kind of Love* so that we might laugh at a few

jokes, between suicide attempts and total collapses, which had sent us shrieking out into the night before, and would again after, those of us who had an after.

I can remember gasping as I raced to catch the Weathersfield bus, with the attractive, fortyish daughter of one of the biggest Texas ranchers, a woman who had a private income of \$2,000 a day after taxes. Superimposed over the image of Joyce Redman's food-dispensing mouth in *Tom Jones*, I still see the heiress's apologetic smile as she murmurs, "You know, I've never ridden in a bus."

Discharged from the hospital at the end of 1964, but living in Hartford, I would herd together some of my friends still inside, sign the responsibility sheet for them, and take them out on Sunday afternoon and weekday nights.

We might see *Mirage*, and I dazzled them with my brilliance as I whispered, "He's the murderer," when Kevin McCarthy first appeared on the screen. Later, at the ice cream parlor, I gave away my tricks—what the hell—and succumbed to their entreaties as to how I knew, by informing them that

no lip from a fresh New Yorker, to which I would reply that I didn't see Miss Hepburn promenading on Bloomfield Avenue. She'd had the good sense to leave thirty-five years before.

I remember *Darling*, because that was the first movie I ever reviewed, and *Ship of Fools*, because the manager of the East Hartford theater where it was playing obligingly started the film ten minutes late, after my car had stalled while racing to get there. I was moving up in the world, and I repaid this *beau geste* by coolly murdering the movie.

By September, my *Hartford Times* review of *To Die in Madrid* had been blown up in front of the Carnegie Hall Cinema in Manhattan and elicited a very nice note from Judith Crist, in which she'd said how much she liked the review, how well written it was, and how she'd wished it was hers, a note which saved me from being fired. Several of Hartford's most preeminent were up in arms over my casual dismissal of their city in such one-liners as "Hartford has delusions of mediocrity," and "Farmington is where excrement lives on increment."

Things got better over the next three years. I

Christie



THROUGH A DECADE

it took no especial prescience to realize that when a fairly well-known actor has either nothing to do through most of a murder mystery or arrives halfway through the movie, he will be the one who has the last sequence aria as he shrieks, "I did it and I'm glad!"

And that meretricious kitsch, *Where Love Has Gone*, still lives for me as I recall the hoots of derisive laughter from my companions—the son of a former corporation president, an Atlanta neurosurgeon, the wife of a restaurant chain president, the daughters of two prominent movie stars—as a desperate Susan Hayward, whose daughter is in custody after a murder, shows the girl's room, with its records, posters, and dolls, to stern social worker Jane Greer, and says, "As you can see, she had everything."

In July 1965, more or less as therapy, I began to write three columns a week for the *Hartford Times* on theater and other cultural subjects. I received twenty dollars a column and was glad to get it. My best friend, a corporation scion, was emptying cartons in the storeroom of Hartford's largest department store for nothing, privileged to spend a few hours among the sane and driven.

By August, I was doing an occasional movie review, which began by chance, since I had free rein and could do anything I pleased. Nothing ever happened in Hartford except for people telling me that that was where Katharine Hepburn was born and where her family still lived, and so they'd take

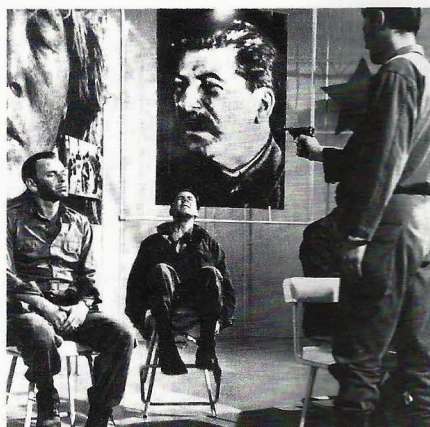
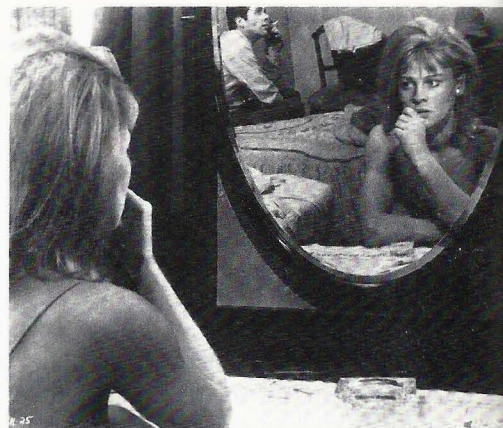


Hoffman

continued to see movies in Hartford, New Haven, and Boston, while reviewing theater openings in those cities, and I was spending increasingly more time in New York City. First one night a week, then two, finally four, and as the panic I'd felt when I first began started to subside, and I knew I was going to live, though I didn't always know why, my cautious optimism was reflected in my appreciation of certain movies that others of my age group were warier about.

Because I could sit back now and add up my life and realize what had gone wrong, what had been done to me when I was small and vulnerable, and what I had then gone on doing to myself, I could appreciate the problems of Dustin Hoffman being manipulated by Anne Bancroft in *The Graduate* and could sympathize with the emerging new generation, then quietly commencing its revolution against my own generation, of which I no longer felt a part.

And as I could now express verbally the withheld anxieties which had led me to alcohol, tranquilizers, and sleeping pills, and could finally realize that I didn't have to love everybody and everybody didn't have to love me back, the pent-up resentments and furies I had stifled or turned inward for so long were let out in hot and cold running prose and in my contemptuous attitude toward all of the social, economic, and cultural class subdivisions which exist in a town the size of Hartford, with all of its insurance company wealth.



By 1968, I was back in New York permanently, working for the Gannett papers, suddenly appearing in Westchester-Rockland. There all of my friends who had done the right things—like marrying the boss's daughter or going into their father's business—while I was doing the wrong, and who were now living in \$200,000 homes in Rye, Scarsdale, and New Rochelle, were shocked to learn that I was still alive, would call to say, "You didn't miss a thing. Being a parent today is heartbreak."

So is not being a parent, but they couldn't be expected to understand that. Take the high road, take the low road, nobody gets to Scotland anyway, and with my datelines suddenly emanating from London, Paris, Rome, Tunis, Marrakech, Dublin, and Madrid, to which the quest for movie production stories were now taking me, my life looked good to them, and in a weird way they almost resented me. And while I was busy adding it all up, so were the movies. Dustin Hoffman had created a new kind of hero in *The Graduate*, inaugurating what Katharine Hepburn would call "the age of freaks," and pictures like *Z*, *Downhill Racer*, *Goodbye, Columbus*, *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here*, and others were attempting to hold mirrors up to social and political values and inequities, figuring out what one must lose in order to win, or discovering that the meek do not necessarily inherit the earth.

This is a fact I was well aware of in my own life and in the lives of my disenfranchised friends from the Institute. They had either returned to their

stately mansions or were trying forlornly to make it on their own and were blowing out their brains or sustaining their remaining illusions and delusions once more with alcohol and drugs.

As my fury against the "establishment" grew, out came *Easy Rider*, and I was up there on the screen, sharing a bike with Dennis Hopper, Peter Fonda, and Jack Nicholson, riding across the Fascist red-neck hinterland. My private revolution neatly coincided with their public one. I now saw myself as a premature hippie, who had dropped out and done his own thing before anyone knew what dropping out and one's thing even were. In 1969, it was the expected thing to do when you came of age. In 1959, you were just nuts.

New directors were emerging—John Korte, Mike Nichols, Michael Ritchie, Roman Polanski—and new stars—Hoffman, Robert Redford, Ali MacGraw, Mia Farrow, Ryan O'Neal, Steve McQueen, and Richard Benjamin.

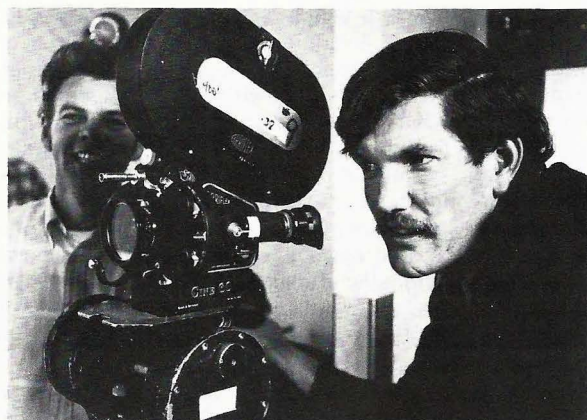
Some would go up and up, and some would hurtle down like Roman candles and disappear.

Within the next couple of years, there would be Kent State, and the social revolution would disappear along with the Roman candles, and the flower children would discover sex, drugs, and finally a fundamentalist God, and the little wan angels, begging, "Do you have a quarter?" would be brain-washedly shrieking at Sun Moon's Nuremberg-type rallies, or as Hare Krishnas, shimmying like my Sister Kate down Fifth Avenue in their

Important films of the sixties. Clockwise, from left: *Midnight Cowboy*, *Bullitt*, *Darling*, *The Graduate*, *Easy Rider*, *The Manchurian Candidate*.



New directors who emerged during the sixties. Top: Mike Nichols, John Cassavetes; bottom, Michael Ritchie, Roman Polanski.



saffron-colored robes.

Eventually there would be *Watergate* and *All the President's Men*, but that is getting ahead of the story. In 1970, there was still the calm before the storm, the short wait between trains and *Five Easy Pieces*, *M*A*S*H*, *Patton*, *Airport*, *Woodstock*, *Myra Breckenridge*, and *Love Story*.

By 1970, I was a member of the New York Critics' Circle, had respectability, and even the beginnings of class. I could sit in screening rooms with such colleagues as Vincent Canby, Pauline Kael, Judith Crist, Andrew Sarris, and Richard Schickel.

By 1970, old Hollywood friends who had run under cars to avoid me when they saw me approaching on Fifth Avenue in the early sixties—that is, when I could screw up enough courage to even walk on Fifth Avenue—were now running under newer models of the same cars and thrusting sunburned faces at me with big grins, saying, "What's the matter? Don't you talk to your poor friends anymore?" and "What's the matter, you a sore winner or something?"

By 1970, I could even feel a kind of nostalgia for the crazy years of 1962 to 1964, for the lack of responsibility I'd felt then, and the not giving a damn about anything because I couldn't look ahead. I didn't even know then that there would be an ahead.

And by 1976, I could even make jokes about it. ★

Bernard Drew is film critic for the Gannett newspapers.

The Catalog

The American Film Institute Catalog, Feature Films 1961-70 is a two-volume, 2,244-page reference work designed as the definitive source for information on all feature films released in the United States during the 1960s. Criteria for inclusion were that each film be at least forty-five minutes in length and have been released commercially in the United States between January 1, 1961 and December 31, 1970.

Volume I lists the main entries for 5,775 films, including technical descriptions (gauge, color process, running time), production and releasing companies, release dates, technical credits, cast lists, literary or dramatic sources, detailed synopses, and subject classification. The classification aims at aiding the film scholar and the social historian in tracing issues, personalities, and trends as they are reflected in the films of the decade. Volume II is a comprehensive listing of individual and company names, authors of literary or dramatic sources, and subjects.

The two volumes are the latest in a continuing AFI project to classify all films released in this country. Volumes for the 1920s have already been issued, and work is underway on the 1910s. R. R. Bowker is the publisher.

in Nîmes, France; that "jeans," as in blue jeans, comes from the French pronunciation of the home port of sailors seen wearing them, Genoa; and that "dungarees" comes from a similarly named Indian town near Bombay, where people were wearing pants when Europeans were still in robes or hose.)

Besides those old-time movie people, including directors King Vidor and Henry King, the participants included some new-timers like Eastwood, Peter Fonda, Warren Oates (the nearest thing to an old-time movie cowboy we have now), and Monte Hellman, a director of immense promise, indeed of considerable achievement, whose work keeps getting shuffled to the bottom half of double bills in neighborhood theaters. There was a sprinkle of journalists: *Time's* Richard Schickel, Arthur Knight of the *Hollywood Reporter*, Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., of *American Heritage*, Philip French of the BBC, Raymond Belour of Paris and editor of *Le Western*. Most of the participants, however, were academics.

Together, they composed a convincing, at times contradictory—therefore probably more correct—theory of the Western as an American myth. In the most brilliant scholarly paper of the conference, Richard Slotkin of Wesleyan University traced the rise of the frontier from the beginnings at Plymouth and Jamestown to mythic status. A century and a half before James Fenimore Cooper there existed the legend of the white man who lives with the Indians, or "savages" as they were called, who masters their arcane lore, and, by the use of this lore, first protects his fellow whites from slaughter by the savages, then ensures that the whites shall inherit the earth mistakenly occupied by those savages. Cooper, himself raised on the then frontier of western New York, took these materials and fashioned them into an ongoing myth across half a century of time, half a continent of space, and half a dozen names for his single hero: Leatherstocking, Deerslayer, Pathfinder, Natty Bumppo, Hawkeye, and the Old Trapper.

The next great step was one in which Slotkin saw a decidedly sinister aspect: the dime novels of the West, particularly those of Ned Buntline, which Slotkin saw as a conscious, deliberate effort on the part of Buntline's employers to keep the masses contented and admiring of the kind of individualist hero found on the frontier and at the head of Gilded Age capitalism.

Out of this complex history came the Western movie, which manifests all of the legendary strains Slotkin outlined. Although it ran counter to Slotkin's thesis about the Western dime novel, the most fascinating movie at the conference was King Vidor's *Man Without a Star*, which

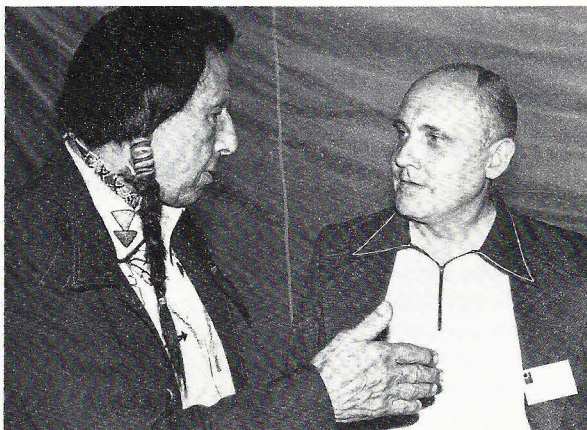
somehow got right by me when it came out in 1955, possibly because in those days I thought movies began with D. W. Griffith and jumped almost at once to Rossellini and that crowd.

Vidor's film, for one thing, presents a ranch as a workplace, which is rare enough in itself. The movie also presents the range as a locale for predatory capitalism of the worst kind, which, in my own viewing experience, is unique. Jeanne Crain arrives on the ranch as the new owner, makes a few business-with-pleasure passes at Kirk Douglas (whom she promotes to foreman), and reveals her master plan: triple the size of the herd with Texas imports; work the hell out of the land, the "government grass" that was the open range; and get out with a fast profit before feeling the effects of the depletion. Douglas, a fervent opponent of the barbed wire that was closing in the range, goes over to the wire-stringers, and the range war is on. Douglas gives a good performance throughout and has one ex-

a small (and unfortunately unknown), masterpiece of the form.

On what range boss Belson called Social Responsibility Day, the talks and meetings centered on two dissident groups, women and Indians. Diane Christian of the State University of New York at Buffalo gave a thorough and thoughtful analysis of woman's place in the movie Western and of its profound differences from woman's place in the historical West. Audience response seemed to focus on demands that this blatant misrepresentation be ended, with women shown as tall in the saddle and fast on the draw. For me, the charmer at that session was Blanche Sweet, who indignantly pointed out that she herself had been portraying—in *That Girl Montana*, among others—a self-reliant Western woman some years before Christian was born, let alone allowed to go to the movies.

There were a number of serious, scholarly, and properly objecting Indian repre-



Indian actor Iron Eyes Cody and film historian William Everson were two participants at the Sun Valley conference.

traordinarily graceful and inventive scene in the saloon worked by Claire Trevor as the hooker with the heart of gold.

The other movie that reached me was one I hadn't seen, because it has had only limited theatrical distribution in this country: Hellman's *Ride the Whirlwind*, made in 1966, written by and starring Jack Nicholson, who had the same quality of angular innocence that he has now. In *Whirlwind*, he is one of a trio of would-be holdup men who quite accidentally bed down with a small band of real outlaws just in time to be surrounded by a vigilante group. The professional outlaws are wiped out. The neophytes try for the canyon lip, and only Nicholson makes it. In the process he reluctantly, but unflinchingly, kills the farmer in whose cabin he takes refuge, and finally abandons his mortally wounded companion. The companion covers Nicholson's escape and dies. The story is told with such total economy, such absolute sureness of touch in camerawork and editing, that it is

sentatives present, but the two memorable presentations were those of non-Indian editor and author Al Josephy, who made an impassioned plea for some measure of justice toward the Indians with an awareness that the question is now one of survival; and Iron Eyes Cody, who said again and again that he himself, Iron Eyes, has been largely responsible for whatever Indian authenticity the movies may have achieved from time to time and that his private museum of Indian artifacts is a principal source for that authenticity.

Richard Schickel and I, in a private, two-man seminar on the myths and images of conferences on the movies, reached a few tentative conclusions about the conference culture we have both studied in a haphazard and desultory fashion, subtly appropriate to the subject. One such conclusion was that quite often some blazing insights come unexpectedly in throwaway lines from panelists or speakers in reply to questions, in ques-

tions themselves, even in casual comments.

For instance, just before the beginning of a powerhouse panel—Schickel, Knight, Hellman, Slotkin, Everson, and Bruce Jackson among others—on “The Postwar Western,” one of the students who made up a large part of the paying audience, arose to ask in genuine curiosity, “It says this is about the postwar Western. Which war?”

Schickel had the wit to reply immediately, the Civil War, of course, but the question lingered, reverberating uneasily in a lot of the older minds present.

Again, Tim McCoy, in response to some lengthy analysis of the gunfighters, said that he had come along in time to know quite a few of them and he always called them “pimp fighters,” since they usually worked as hired guns for monopolistic brothel, saloon, and gambling hall keepers.

King Vidor, in response to my own sketchy review of nineteenth-century Western painting as an antecedent of the movies, revealed that he once set up a cavalry charge following exactly a painting by Remington.

Finally, Buster Crabbe not only exquisitely outlined the difficulties of fighting a “hawkman,” which he did as Flash Gordon—you have to hold the wings with one hand while punching him with the other—but happily recalled the days of the 1930s’ B-Westerns. One of them, he said, was completely shot between Tuesday morning and Thursday night, which he thinks may be an all-time record for completing a film.

That fact prompted one of several thoughts I came away with, namely that the frame of the humble Western movie just may not be sturdy enough to support the elaborate, even elegant, fabric of exegesis many of us have been hanging on it for some years now.

And in conclusion, one conclusion: It is highly possible that when Western movies become the subject for serious scholarly labors, patient discussions, and subdistinctions, it may just mean that the Western movie has died without anyone noticing, a conclusion reinforced, for me, by *The Missouri Breaks*.

The best of the cowboy painters, Charlie Russell, said to a Montana audience just before his death, “I wish to God that this country was just like it was when I first saw it, and that none of you folks were here at all.”

If Russell had been a picture-cowboy instead of a real one, he might have said exactly the same thing at Sun Valley.

Frank Getlein, a journalist and author, is now critic-at-large for WMAL-TV, Washington, D.C.

underground and experimental films were among the first to see the advantages of tape. Its low cost relative to film has made it attractive to them, of course. But once into it, they soon find videotape has special capabilities—keying, fragmenting and superimposing images, creating visual as well as audio feedback—that makes it fun to play with (in the way that all experimental art often has the quality of play).

One of the chief protagonists of the experimental videotape movement, Gene Youngblood, sums up the attitude of the artists in his book, *Expanded Cinema*, when he says, “Traditional use of the video system to imitate cinema is, in the words of one artist, ‘like hooking a horse to a rocket.’ Still, most artists are quick to admit that even this limited potential of the television medium has not been fully explored.”

And industry filmmakers are only beginning now to explore it. There has been some limited interest among them in videotape from the time it became available. Jerry Lewis, as actor and director in his own films, began the practice of simultaneously taping and shooting a scene on film. Using videotape’s immediate playback capability, he would then view the results and make whatever adjustments needed to be made in his own performance in the next take. It has also become fairly common practice now to shoot screen tests and makeup tests on videotape. Marlon Brando would never have consented to a formal screen test for his part in *The Godfather*, but when Francis Ford Coppola showed up one evening with a videotape recorder and, “just fooling around,” got him to pack his cheeks with toilet paper and put on the now-famous Corleone rasp, he managed to convince the dubious Robert Evans that Brando would be perfect as the Mafia patriarch.

But there have been ambitious efforts on tape—among them a full-length theatrical feature by Frank Zappa. The mad doctor of rock ‘n’ roll has been a closet filmmaker for years. Because he had to make a movie on a limited budget, he went to videotape. “I got surrealistic optical effects that alone would have cost a million dollars if they had been shot on film,” he says.

200 Motels was shot in England in seven eight-hour days, edited in eleven ten-hour days, and then over a three-month period transferred from videotape to film. It is a tricky process, not just because it means adjusting videotape speed (thirty frames per second) to film speed (twenty-four frames per second), but also because

original videotape color is difficult to duplicate on film. But in this case it worked just fine. Nobody could object to *200 Motels* from the standpoint of visual quality. In fact, Zappa says that when his movie opened in Los Angeles, word went out in the industry, and he saw professional cameramen and color technicians leave their seats and walk down close to the screen to study color quality and contrast; they would come away shaking their heads, saying they just couldn’t believe it could be that good.

Zappa, who considers the tape-to-film experiment quite successful and says he would do it again, has reversed the process and put film to tape in his recent made-for-television production, *A Token of His Extreme*. He put 16mm animation on a videotape of a studio concert (it is not possible to use animation directly on tape). The show has already been broadcast on French and Swiss television, and should be seen soon in America.

And while Zappa’s *200 Motels* is one sort of “tape movie,” the PBS “Visions” series opener, *Two Brothers*, is another. On this one, producer Barbara Schultz, director Bert Brinckerhoff, and writer Conrad Bromberg have collaborated to create what is virtually a motion picture on tape. There is more movement and true film feeling in this production than there has been in a number of theatrical features released in the last few years. Yet it was shot entirely on videotape at a savings over film costs.

Economy was important, of course, and the whole idea with “Visions” was to do as much on videotape as possible. “But,” says Schultz, “especially in *Two Brothers* we were after that feeling of immediacy and urgency and the flow that tape can give, a documentary feel that you can’t quite get from film. So cost was not the only factor, and certainly not the chief one. Many producers think of videotape simply as the cheap medium, and so that’s the way they go at it, and naturally it turns out badly. I love videotape. I’d rather work with it. And it’s interesting, too, that in some ways film and videotape are getting closer together. Obviously we’re trying to get closer to film. But not quite so obviously, some films today are getting closer to that intimate, more immediate feeling of tape.”

Frank Zappa: “There would be a future for a kind of merged videotape and film technology if the industry wanted it to be. The trouble is the studios have this investment in equipment that has to be amortized over centuries. Videotape wouldn’t be right for everything—for big epics and action movies and so on—but it would be right for a lot.”

Bruce Cook is a contributing editor of *American Film*.

Fringe Benefits

On Authors in Hollywood

Richard Gilman

The socio-history of moviemaking in Hollywood seems to be well into a second and diminished phase. With the primary themes and sources pretty much exhausted in the revisions of and increments to Terry Ramsaye, the reminiscences of the pioneers, the biographies of the moguls and stars, etc., there's a scratching around now for other things.

Well, the cult psyche is extraordinarily resourceful in turning up material for its obsessions, so we're going to have to keep our hip boots on for a while. Even so, a note of desperation is already detectable; the contributions get odder and odder, increasingly peripheral, strained, dubious.

Tom Dardis's *Some Time in the Sun*¹ (the title comes from Sheilah Graham's account of how on first seeing F. Scott Fitzgerald she thought he ought to "get out into the sun") is a case in point. A book with a vaguely plausible subject, it almost entirely lacks a theme or argument, or, to put it more accurately, the argument it does make is heavily undermined by the work itself.

That some eminent writers, novelists for the most part, have worked in Hollywood is common knowledge, and that these writers have generally prostituted themselves in such jobs or weren't even able to manage successful whoring is a piece of conventional wisdom. What

Dardis would like to do is overthrow that notion and erect in its place a counterbalancing idea of a positive kind concerning the Hollywood experiences of the figures he's chosen to write about: Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Aldous Huxley, Nathanael West, and James Agee.

It's a miscellaneous group, scarcely the cluster of "some of the very greatest names in modern literature" the book claims it to be. Agee and Huxley certainly don't fit that description, and West's reputation has been eroding in recent years. But questions of stature aside, the evidence Dardis has unearthed about his subjects' screenwriting endeavors serves to reinforce rather than refute what we have thought.

What Dardis's book comes down to is a case built on a handful of more or less admirable pictures—*Pride and Prejudice*, *The Big Sleep*, *The African Queen*, *To Have and Have Not*—on which these writers labored (and then usually in oblique or piecemeal ways) and a claim that some significant works of fiction were brought into being or animated by their authors' experiences in California. Against this, however, is a far more extensive factual record of hackwork, trivia, and outright failure, and an emotional one of indifference at best, and disgust, at worst.

With the exception of Agee, the only "movie lover" among them, the men Dardis writes about went to Hollywood under one degree or another of financial exigency, and remained or went back there, if they did, for almost purely economic reasons.

In 1936, the year before Fitzgerald joined MGM, Dardis tells us, his book royalties were \$81.18 (in 1939 they would be \$33.00). Throughout Faulkner's screenwriting career his books sold little better than Fitzgerald's. West, as impecunious as they, hadn't even a reputation from which to bargain with the studios. Huxley could have gotten by on his books, but welcomed the affluence Hollywood made possible and in time be-

came addicted to it.

None of them, not even Agee, came out of his screenwriting stint with a higher opinion of Hollywood than he had started with. Fitzgerald had written in *The Crack-Up* that "the novel . . . was becoming subordinate to a communal art that, whether in the hands of Hollywood merchants or Russian idealists, was capable of reflecting only the tritest thought, the most obvious emotion."

And though Dardis tells us that Fitzgerald took his job seriously and tried to make something of it, he also speaks of his "intense dislike of collaboration in any form," quotes Nunnally Johnson, one of his sources for the period, on Fitzgerald's inability "to understand or turn out dramatic work" and his lack of "any genuine interest in screenwriting," and says himself that "by desperately embracing the Hollywood 'system,' Fitzgerald wound up by severely compromising his talents and wrote some truly dreadful material."

Faulkner, whose relationship with Howard Hawks seems to have been the only positive element of his California sojourns ("It was awful nice having him around," Hawks once said with his nonsensical grammar), described himself as a "movie doctor." "When they run into a section they don't like, I rework it," he added, and went on to say, "I don't write scripts. I don't know enough about it." Johnson told Dardis that he "never thought for a moment" that Faulkner had any interest in Hollywood, about which Faulkner himself once said in a letter, "I don't like the climate, the people, their way of life." And Dardis says that what Faulkner mostly did and thought of himself as doing was "glorified hackwork" and speaks of his "despair" at his "complete and absolute bondage to film writing."

West seems not to have been quite so embattled as Fitzgerald or Faulkner, turning out his "schlock" scripts for Republic, Dardis says, with a degree of equanimity and even amusement. Yet he once wrote to the novelist Josephine Herbst that "a writer needs to lead a writer's life . . . the whole business of thinking and reverie and walking and reading, and you can't do that in Hollywood." Huxley, who stayed there the longest and was given the most "literary" assignments (*Jane Eyre*, *Pride and Prejudice*, etc.) was the least troubled, though even he once complained that "telling a story in purely pictorial terms doesn't allow any of the experimentation with words in their relation to things, events, and ideas, which is, *au fond*, my busi-

¹*Some Time in the Sun* by Tom Dardis. New York: Scribner's, 274 pp., illustrated, \$9.95.

ness." As for Agee, who never lost his passion for films, his only real success was his contribution to *The African Queen*, while his own scripts, Dardis says, were frequently in violation of "many of the principles he seemed to hold most dear in his [criticism]."

All right. If the record doesn't support his thesis, Dardis can turn to the "important" novels his subjects produced as a more or less direct result of their stints in movieland. He argues that *The Last Tycoon* and *The Day of the Locust* are proof of Fitzgerald's and West's having been inspired by their experiences, that Huxley's later fiction reflects the "profound" effect of "Hollywood on his sensibilities," and that Faulkner's *A Fable* came directly out of one of his screenwriting projects. Yet both the Fitzgerald and West novels owe nothing technical or aesthetic to screenwriting and are, if anything, *anti*-Hollywood tales. Huxley's late fiction is embarrassingly strained and even foolish, and *A Fable*, as Dardis himself is forced to admit, is perhaps Faulkner's very worst novel.

As a result of this intellectual debility, *Some Time in the Sun* is reduced to recommending itself to us as a source of minor detail—who worked on what films and to what effect, what were their salaries—and a collection of anecdotes, not all of them new and not all of them particularly revelatory.

Among the ones that have some weight either as footnotes to cultural history or as high-level gossip are the account of Fitzgerald's quarrel with Joseph L. Mankiewicz over his script for *Three Comrades*, and the retelling, with new details, of how Faulkner skipped back to Mississippi in order to be able to write "at home."

At one point in his chapters on Faulkner, Dardis speaks of the latter's having gone on, throughout his Hollywood career, with "his own work—his real work." The admission is a central clue both to the failure of this book to fulfill its intention and to what it might have been had Dardis seen a bit further and thought a little more rigorously.

For there is a subject here, or several of them, among which the least interesting is the particular superficial fates of five writers. The relationships between language and the visual, between literary and pictorial genius, imagination and technical concerns, the questions of mass culture versus originality and that of communal art or artisanship at odds with personal vision—these things are what suggest themselves but what *Some Time in the Sun* doesn't begin to investigate.

Richard Gilman is a professor at Yale University's School of Drama. He is the author of *The Making of Modern Drama*.

A Screenwriter's Odyssey

On Donald Ogden Stewart

Robert Sklar

Brace yourself, it's time for another movie trivia quiz: What screenwriter fought the bulls with Hemingway in Pamplona, in the glorious expatriate days of the early 1920s? Which screenwriter spent the Great Depression years living on the Whitney family's lavish Long Island estate? Who was the screenwriter who served as president of the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League and the left-wing League of American Writers? And name the screenwriter who lists among his credits *Holiday*, *Love Affair*, and *The Philadelphia Story*. Answer one and you've answered them all, for the unlikely truth is that Donald Ogden Stewart did all those things, and more.

Donald who? When you consider that the act of writing, like putting your name on a symphony hall by paying to build it, is one of the more common ways to overcome oblivion, it seems clear that screenwriting is among the least likely paths to literary immortality. We remember screenwriters who were principally book writers—William Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald, but not Jules Furthman, who was undeniably the best movie writer of the three. Donald Ogden Stewart's fate has been even more pathetic, however, for he once had been a best-selling humorist and popular playwright, yet for years his name has seen the light only in scholarly tomes—and in the quick flash of credits when his films are screened at colleges or on television.

Now Stewart, at the advanced age of eighty-one, has told his life story,¹ or at least the first five decades of it. He has lived the last quarter century in Great Britain, in a self-imposed exile that was made official for a time when his passport was canceled by the U.S. State Depart-

ment. Stewart earned his screenwriter's oblivion prematurely, a victim of the post-World War II Hollywood blacklist. This Exeter and Yale man, literary expatriate, intimate of the wealthy, author of comic tales and screwball comedy screenplays, was deprived of his livelihood at the height of his career as a "subversive." He was, of course, not the only one, but given his past, he was perhaps the unlikeliest.

Stewart was an intensely social man, yet his autobiography, fascinating and readable, is curiously solipsistic. Very little is learned here about his Hollywood work—*Holiday* is covered in a paragraph, *Love Affair* in less—and only a bit more about Broadway and his writing career in the 1920s, but a great deal about Yale, Exeter, and childhood in Columbus, Ohio.

Memory's camera loses its focus as it recedes into the past, broadening its field of vision as the youth's and child's life paradoxically encompasses a more intimate, circumscribed world. The book's narrative, moving forward, grows narrower as the professional and social world widens. Indeed it comes to focus on the transformative experience, the single most important moment of Stewart's life, his conversion, in 1935, to a personal vision of "Socialism."

Conversion is the exact, appropriate word. Stewart was not molded in the American Puritan tradition—in youth he attended the Episcopal Church—but his autobiography has a strong flavor of the old-time conversion narrative. The "sinner" reveling in his "sins," and indeed being successful and happy in them, oblivious to the world of truth; then brief, disquieting intimations which cause him to momentarily question his path, though not to abandon it; and finally the moment of revelation which comes not from without but from within.

It is important to regard Stewart's political conversion in this quasi-religious sense. He appears to have had very little ideological or tactical political understanding. He confesses that his Socialism "was a bit on the romantic side"; indeed, like many other literary converts to political radicalism in the 1930s, he saw Socialism as a higher form of old-fashioned American individualism. One can imagine how the dedicated Hollywood Left not only welcomed this polished WASP, with his closet full of formal wear and his well-to-do friends, but made him their front man, their toastmaster, their facade before the world.

Stewart's story, however, is not quite so simple. The prime motivation in his life, he suggests, was not to be right, but to be loved. The character trait to which he alludes, again and again, is his insecurity in human relations: "I was a rather

¹By *A Stroke of Luck! An Autobiography* by Donald Ogden Stewart. New York: Paddington Press Ltd./The Two Continents Publishing Group, 302 pp., illustrated, \$10.95.

timid, middle-class conformist who hated fights and wanted desperately to be well liked....I am cursed with a need to have people like me....I have been cursed from childhood with an almost obsessive need to be liked by others."

Indeed, Stewart hints that the source of his comic talent lay in this weakness—humor became a tool to diffuse the strain of his yearning. Directed at himself, humor served as an antidote to his need, took away the sting of potential rejection and, paradoxically, this weapon he developed in self-defense made him beloved by all.

Humor, as the psychoanalytic method has shown us, contains a good deal of disguised aggression, and it was with outward-directed aggression (rather than self-directed) that Stewart first made his name. In the early 1920s he began writing parodies of popular writers. Published in *Vanity Fair*, these led to a book, *A Parody Outline of History*. His other works published include a parody of etiquette books, *Perfect Behavior*; a satire on the touring American middle-class family, *Mr. and Mrs. Haddock Abroad*; a satire on the American success story, *The Crazy Fool*, about a young man who inherits a decrepit insane asylum and must make it profitable so he can earn the wealthy girl's hand in marriage; and other humorous books. Wit, fueled by alcohol, was also making him a hit in all the exciting literary and artistic coteries of that exciting time: the expatriates of Paris and the Riviera, the Algonquin circle in New York, and, inevitably, Hollywood.

Inevitably, Hollywood. Stewart's relation with the movie world adds another major strand to the complex web of poses he took and choices he made leading up to the decisive, clarifying act of his life. Stewart depicts himself in the familiar mold of the weak and drifting author lured to Hollywood because he lacks the character and discipline to do the work he ought to do.

In the late years of silent film, he did a brief, unsuccessful stint at MGM, and this failure made him all the more anxious to succeed—every writer and socialite from Palm Beach to Bar Harbor might love him, but how could he live without the approval of Harry Rapf, Eddie Mannix, and Irving Thalberg?

He even became an actor—he played in the original Broadway cast of Philip Barry's *Holiday*, in the role Edward Everett Horton was to play in the 1938 film for which Stewart was co-writer. His friend King Vidor cast him in an early talkie, *Not So Dumb*, at MGM, and Thalberg praised his acting more readily

than his screenwriting. He began hobnobbing with the social upper crust, particularly Jock Whitney, the horseman and publisher, and his sister Joan Whitney Payson, later owner of the New York Mets. Stewart had his own play, *Rebound*, produced on Broadway. But, still, what he wanted most was to be liked by MGM.

In the talkie era his talents were more obvious. After writing two pictures for Walter Wanger at Paramount, *Laughter* (1930) and *Tarnished Lady* (1931), he won a second chance in Culver City. This time he made good, and "Father Irving" smiled. Stewart proved himself an able script doctor. He began to invest his ego in the work.

And then came the fall. Writing *The White Sister*, he discovered that the star, Helen Hayes, wanted a new ending, and called in her husband, Charles MacArthur, to provide it. Having already made a name for doing to others what MacArthur had done to him, Stewart was incongruously outraged. "From that moment on I resolved never to care what they did to my work. I was now, I told myself, a professional, highly paid for giving my employers what they wanted."

This episode is important only for the clue it provides in understanding Stewart's behavior. In every fat man, they say, there's a thin man struggling to get out; in every humorist there's a Jeremiah. Stewart needed to make too much of this commonplace Hollywood experience because he needed to fuel the internal revolt he was fomenting against himself. He was adored by everyone for his wit and humor, but that meant he was loved for his self-defensive mask.

Now he asked his friends to love him for his "real" self, the serious man, the preacher. It is not to be implied that Stewart's conversion to Socialism was not politically reasonable or courageous, for clearly it was both. But it also served essential psychic needs: The man who thinks of himself as cursed with an obsession to be liked takes a step certain to alienate his conservative bosses and his high society friends. He was shocked when they disapproved of him.

Still, many others in the Hollywood elite took a similar step in the mid-1930s when they recognized the growing Nazi menace. It was only later, as more and more producers and leading players dropped away in the face of anti-Communist pressure and a sharply splintering left, that the depth of Stewart's transformation became apparent. He was confused, he was naive, he hardly knew a Stalinist from a Trotskyite, but he was committed—almost to commitment itself. He stayed on the radical ship while most of the passengers and many of the crew were jumping overboard, and it has

borne him now for nearly forty years—half a lifetime.

This is a book less about movies than about a man. Readers may be disappointed to find neither a filmography of Stewart's Hollywood work nor an index, and many possible topics are left untouched, including Stewart's relations with George Cukor, for whom he wrote at least six pictures. The book will provide little aid in assessing Stewart's significance as a screenwriter. It does make clear, however, that Stewart got his best assignments in the years of his growing estrangement from the Hollywood establishment. Perhaps they only wanted to bring him back into the fold—or perhaps they knew all along his talents remained essentially in the comic vein.

In 1940, the middle-aged rebel won an Oscar for best screenplay for his adaptation of Philip Barry's *The Philadelphia Story*. Everyone still liked him, when he made them laugh. But he was near wit's end.

Historian Robert Sklar is the author of *Movie-Made America*.

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(signed) Hollis Alpert
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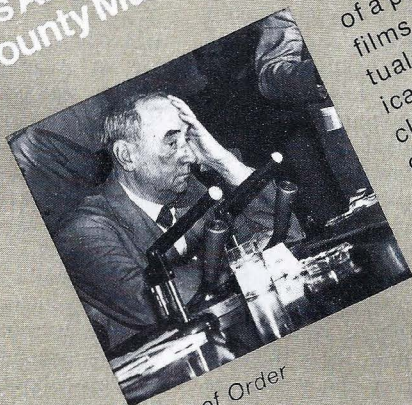
A comprehensive tribute to one of the American screen's most popular actors—highlighted by a special showing of *Vertigo* and a personal appearance by Mr. Stewart on October 3. Other films include *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *Rope*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, and *Destry Rides Again*.

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Antonio Chemasi

Mother's Boy

John Leonard, surveying the appeal of television's anchormen, finds his favorite is NBC's John Chancellor, at least for political conventions. Why? "John Chancellor appeals to me as the serious older brother, the one Mother swore she would send to college even if she had to steal food stamps, so that he would make something of himself and marry a Wellesley girl and buy enough life insurance to tide over the grandchildren while his younger siblings ended up in group therapy, the Tidal Basin, Angola, or the Marriott Hotel."

"Which To Watch, When To Switch" by John Leonard. *More*, July-August 1976.

You've Come a Long Way, Francis

They laughed when he stood up to direct *The Godfather*, Susan Braudy reports, and Francis Ford Coppola still recalls "the crew's snide asides as he worked through scenes with Marlon Brando and Al Pacino, sometimes requiring as many as fifty camera setups." But Coppola has come a long way, and in a sympathetic profile, Braudy presents a view of a fre-

netic, creative life kept within bounds by a soothing wife. Coppola's latest project is *Apocalypse Now*, and undaunted by tropical storms in the Philippines and financial storms at home, Coppola proceeds on his controversial film about Vietnam. His working methods remain his own. "I'm not one of those Joe Dynamite fast Sidney Lumet type directors," he says. Robert Towne, a Coppola watcher, reports, "Francis may give the appearance of being a bumbler, a romantic mess, but he's in control. He has no secret. He's just a guy who makes more and better choices than anybody [else]."

"Francis Ford Coppola: A Profile" by Susan Braudy. *The Atlantic*, August 1976.

The Sad Side

Robert Altman on what his films have in common: "All my films deal with the same thing: striving, socially and culturally, to stay alive. And once any system succeeds, it becomes its own worst enemy. The good things we create soon create bad things. So nothing is ever going to be utopian, and when I make films like *Nashville* and *Buffalo Bill*, it's not to say we're the worst country in the world, or God, what awful people these are. I'm just saying we're at this point, and it's sad."

"Playboy Interview: Robert Altman." *Playboy*, August 1976.

New Festival Formulas

In 1936, says Gideon Bachmann, Mussolini invented the film festival: Pretty starlets surrounded Il Duce at the Lido of Venice, only Italian and German films were screened, and tourism got a boost. Forty years later, "the starlet-tourism-cinema" formula has spread around the world, but Bachmann thinks the end is in sight. "Slowly but surely it's being taken over by the 'big-city formula' pioneered by the London Film Festival, which brings films directly to viewers without the intermediary of snobbish screenings to critics and professionals on a sexy but remote beach." The new formula is used by the New York Festival, the San Francisco Festival, and the Los Angeles Filmex. Not that the old approach has entirely lost its appeal. Bachmann admits that the festivals not only minister to the appetite—the caviar at Tehran is in abundance—but they also minister to the ego. If you're a filmmaker or film writer, he says, "festivals are useful aids in proping up your self-confidence."

"Confessions of a Festival Goer" by Gideon Bachmann. *Film Quarterly*, Summer 1976.

Caught in the Act

Movietone News has devoted most of an issue to an affectionate study of Samuel Fuller. It includes an interview in which Fuller reminisces about his days as a teenage crime reporter for the *New York Journal*: He kept a collection of suicide notes gathered while on assignment. It also includes studies of three of his films: *I Shot Jesse James*, *The Steel Helmet*, and *Run of the Arrow*. In an appreciation by Richard T. Jameson, Fuller recalls his appearance in Dennis Hopper's *The Last Movie*. He played a director directing a movie, but during one take got so carried away acting a director that he turned his fake camera on the camera filming the scene and ordered the cinematographer out of his range. Strangely, the cinematographer obeyed.

Movietone News, 28 June 1976.

Fed Up

Senator Barry Goldwater, after watching one commercial too many during television's Fourth of July coverage, sent off a letter to the chairman of the Senate Communications Subcommittee: "It seems strange to me that these companies, who get the right to harass their fellow citizens with a license that has cost them nothing, might have been able to have gone one full day...without advertising dog food, cat food, beans, soup, meatballs, etc. I am passing this on to you because, if I have to watch this any more, I am going to become an advocate of cable television, which is paid for so we don't have to look at all the stupidity classified as advertising."

"Goldwater Makes Like Nick Johnson." *Variety*, 4 August 1976.

Seven Years Later

At twenty, Sondra Locke was nominated for an Academy Award for her first screen role in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. Now, at twenty-seven, she has a role in *The Outlaw Josey Wales*. In between there has been a series of forgettable films. Her reflections on her wayward career: "Those were very frustrating years....But I can look back at it now and say I learned a lot. You learn fast that this is a funny business. It's like putting a coin in a slot machine in Las Vegas. But after a while you go with it. You even get a sense of humor about it. You figure, 'Jack Nicholson appeared in Hell's Angels movies for twenty years.'"

"Locke for the Silver Lining" by Ruthe Stein. *Audience*, September 1976.

cinema of the sixties—Eastern European films seemed themselves to be seeking the refuge of the past. A Czech-Polish coproduction, *Two Worlds in the Hotel Pacific*, is directed by Janusz Majewski, whose gothic horror tale, *Lokis*, first revealed his feeling for atmosphere and for period style. His new film is a minutely documented portrayal of the hermetic, mutually exploitative society created in the staff quarters of a grand hotel, early in the century.

The Polish entry, Jerzy Antczak's *Nights and Days*—frankly offered as Poland's answer to "The Forsyte Saga"—is a marathon adaptation, tediously literal, of a period best-seller, set in the years leading up to the First World War. The Hungarian exhibit, *Azonosítás (The Man Without a Name)*, uses the story of a man who has given up his name and identity in a prison camp to examine the problems of the period of Hungarian socialization in 1947. Though its references tend to be elusively local, the freshness of the mise-en-scène indicates the director Laszlo Lugossy as a promising new name. And he was awarded a Berlin Silver Lion for best direction.

Of the Latin American films in Berlin, Mario Robles's *Expropiación (Expropriation)*, from Venezuela, a determinedly aesthetic and decorative study of the exploitation of the Peruvian Indians, seems to suffer from an excess of art, while Felipe Cazals's *Canoa*, from Mexico, suffers from too little.

The subject of *Canoa* is fascinating, the reconstruction of an actual event of 1968, when five young workers from the University of Puebla planned a mountain excursion, but found themselves stranded by bad weather in the little village of San Miguel Canoa, eight kilometers outside the city. Dominated by the village priest who had instilled in them a pious terror of the devil and all his works, but particularly of students and Communists, the villagers displayed their godly zeal by lynching the strangers (who in fact were neither Reds nor students). Two of the boys and two of the villagers who tried to aid them were killed.

Cazals painstakingly reconstructs the incident which the authorities had been inclined to keep dark; and something of the terror of this parable on fanaticism still comes through despite clumsy mise-en-scène, inept performances, and a seriously misguided effort to simulate a style of cinéma vérité.

Perhaps the most attractive and unexpected film in competition was an eccentric little work from Iran, *Baghe Sangui (The Garden of Stones)*, directed by Parviz Kimiavi (to whom the jury bemusedly awarded a Silver Bear for the best first film, even though his previous feature, *The Mongols*, had been widely seen, for

instance, at the Tehran, Chicago, and Mannheim festivals). The leading actor re-creates his own real-life role: The deaf-mute shepherd Darvich Khan was inspired to realize a mystical vision which came to him in the desert, and has spent the past ten years creating a bizarre grotto of stones, wire, and dead trees, embellished here and there with a rotting sheep's or cockerel's head. The reputation of a holy place that the garden has acquired has been encouraged by its creator, who is given to stopping trains and insisting that the passengers dismount to admire and worship.

Occasionally the film is artless and defeated by the problem of how to end an unended story, but the treatment of the protagonist is singularly attractive. Darvich Khan is incorrigibly comic, but is never shown in an undignified or patronizing aspect. His grand disdain of reality is most appealingly revealed in a scene in which an obliging local official is endeavoring to telephone the capital to obtain the release of Darvich's son from military service. The telephone goes dead at the crucial moment; needing materials for his garden, Darvich has chosen that very moment to filch the cables.

The Garden of Stones provided Berlin with an unscheduled excitement: Its showing in the Zoo Palast was marked with banners and a vocal demonstration against "The Fascist Shah Regime" (which had apparently banned the film). The police moved in but, when the audience showed signs of rallying to the defense of the demonstrators, evidently reckoned discretion the better part of valor, and quietly withdrew, leaving the demonstrators to follow suit.

Another extra-festive incident came with the Forum's showing of Nagisa Oshima's *The Empire of the Senses*, at the end of which five gentlemen with their official papers already prepared, marched on the projection box with Teutonic formality, to seize the print. Consequently, scheduled subsequent screenings had to be canceled.

The Empire of the Senses was originally shown at Cannes. A Franco-Japanese coproduction, the film was shot in Tokyo, but the undeveloped negative was sent for processing to Paris since no Japanese laboratory would touch it. Since the action of the film is almost uninterrupted copulation for most of its 104 minutes, climaxing with an orgasmic death by strangulation and the ultimate amputation of the man's sexual member, it is probably doomed to incidents like the Berlin seizure.

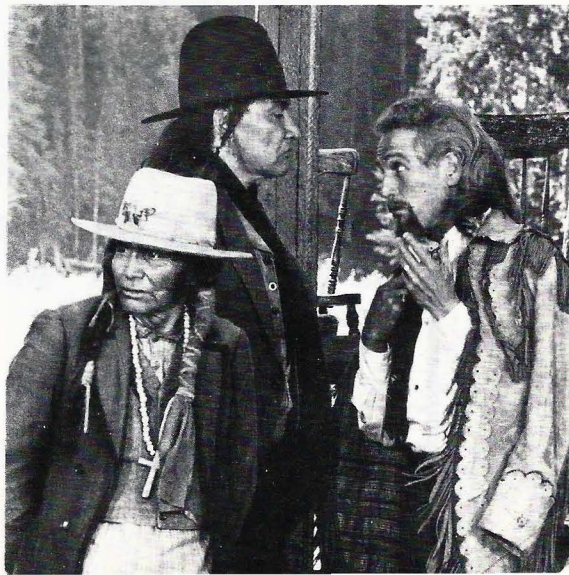
This much said, it must be stated that it is a work altogether without prurience, as direct and pure in its expression as an erotic drawing by Utamaro or Hokusai (who are inevitably recalled by the insistent use of close-ups of the lovers' ec-

static faces). Complex, rigorous, obsessive, the film traces the course of an all-consuming love, which demands fulfillment at all times and in all places, in the bedroom and in the streets, oblivious of the eyes of any spectator, haunted by the growing sense of death as a consummation indissolubly linked to love.

Alongside its radical political commitment, with films on the class struggle and industrial action (the ISKRA cooperative's *La Reprise du Travail aux Usines Wonder*; Nicole le Garrec and René Vautier's *Quand tu disais, Valéry*) and protest movements (Dan Keller's record of a lone dissenter, *Lovejoy's Nuclear War*; Alvin Goldstein's *The Unquiet Death of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg*), the Forum of Young Cinema energetically promotes the films of the Third World. *The Ambassadors* is a Libyan-Tunisian-French production directed by Naceur Ktari, about the life of immigrant North African workers in Paris. *The Everyday Life of a Syrian Village* is the first feature-length documentary of its director Omar Amiralay. *News From the Village*, about the disillusion of a village boy who tries to find work in town, is the first film of a Senegalese woman director, Safi Faye. Haile Gerima's *Harvest 3,000 Years* marks Ethiopia's emergence into the international cinema.

The Forum, too, annually organizes a special section on new German cinema, which in the past has introduced new films by Wim Wenders, Alexander Duge, R. W. Fassbinder, and a score of other directors. This year's crop included Peter Lilienthal's *Es Herrscht Ruhe im Land*, a political fable set in a mythical, but realistically documented, Latin American state, about the need for solidarity in the face of ingratifying Fascism; and Rolf Schübel's *Das Jubiläum unsere Firma wird 50* whose cinéma-vérité reportage centers on the golden jubilee fes-

Frank Kaquitts, Will Sampson, and Paul Newman in Buffalo Bill and the Indians, Berlin's Gold Prize winner.



tivities of a small family business. It offers a much shrewder commentary on German industrial organization than most of the strike record films currently in vogue among progressive German and French filmmakers.

Bernhard Sinkel, the director of *Lina Braake*, has codirected and coscripted *Berlinger (The Outsider)* with Alf Brustel-lin. Their *Citizen Kane* fantasy is about the diverging yet intercrossing lives of two childhood friends faced with the trials of conscience of the Nazi era and the years that have elapsed since. The same problem is seen in its real-life application in the outstanding film of Berlin's New German Film series, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's *The Confessions of Winifred Wagner*.

Hour after hour Winifred Wagner, the English-born widow of Richard Wagner's son Siegfried, talked to Syberberg and his camera about the years at Bayreuth, and the intimate friendship with Adolf Hitler (the Wagners' pet name for him was "Wolf") which lasted from 1923 to 1945. The film runs for five hours; yet it is impossible to experience a moment's boredom or inattention in the presence of this handsome, tough, grimly humorous old lady, scorning fact and discretion alike.

She is blessed with the ability, described by Daniel Ellsberg in Marcel Ophuls's *The Memory of Justice*, to throw up an impregnable wall between herself

and any fact which would taint her own rosy view of history. Ophuls himself has described "the very bourgeois attitude which consists in believing that one can separate what is conventionally called 'politics' from any other human activity such as the exercising of a profession, family life, or love...the worst of escapes from reality and from life's responsibilities that one can imagine."

Thus she insists she is a totally impolitical being. Hitler is recalled as a kind uncle to her children, a generous and gentle friend to her, a necessary protector and benefactor of Bayreuth, merciful to anyone—even homosexuals or Jews—for whom Winifred Wagner pleaded. Reluctantly, she admits there may have been a "dark side," but it was always the fault of someone else. ("He would never have brought Julius Streicher into our house.")

Along with the massive self-deception goes a frankness—according to her own lights—which is devastating. As an English woman, Syberberg asks her if she was disturbed to know of the bombing of Britain and London. Head on one side, she reflects for a moment, then replies, charmingly but firmly, "No, no. Not at all. I thought as a German woman."

Author of *Hollywood in the Twenties*, David Robinson is the film critic for the *Times* (London).

Movies, Myths, and Cadillacs," *In a Narrow Grave*, 1968), Northrop Frye's theory of fictional modes also offers a workable vocabulary, and a method that is flexible and inclusive. Using his terms, Westerns can be seen to have worked their way down from levels of heroic romance, through high-mimetic (tragic) and low-mimetic (realistic) modes, to arrive at the ironic mode (for example, *Little Big Man*).

The point on Frye's cycle next to the ironic is once again the mythic; the reappearance of the heroic outsider who comes to the aid of society (but remains outside) in *A Fistful of Dollars* may parallel, at a crude level, the reappearance of myth in an ironical masterpiece like *Ulysses*. A category like the low-mimetic is helpful in discussing Westerns like *Welcome to Hard Times*, in which the hero, society's protector, far from having special abilities, is either reluctant or downright cowardly.

Still, that there may be alternatives to Wright's method does not detract from the overall impressiveness of the book he has delivered. Two other recent books about Westerns, Jenni Calder's *There Must Be a Lone Ranger* and Jon Tuska's *Filming of the West*, seem, by comparison, lightweight and journalistic, despite the fact that Tuska's is as heavy as a lead weight.

Wright has broken new ground in an area that has seen no cultivation at all—on a conceptual level—since Robert Warshow published his famous pilot essay in 1954. Warshow's thesis, of course, was that the Western's broad appeal resulted from the fact that it offered a "serious orientation to the problem of violence." In the Western, the violence that the hero invariably commits remains to some extent under a moral control. Moreover, and just as importantly, when it is practiced, it is not allowed merely to happen: It is accomplished, that is to say, practiced with style.

That is, of course, a good point, but it is only one point. The fact that Warshow wrote with the authority of *Commentary* and the *Partisan Review* behind him lent it an unnatural currency (it was reprinted in *Encounter*, *Preuves*, and *Der Monat*, and still pops up now and then in anthologies). Warshow died shortly after having his say, and his say was evidently thought to be about enough. Virtually the first serious criticism ever written about the Western seemed destined, for a time, to be the last.

Fortunately, Wright—sitting tall in the saddle, as it were—has reminded us that in America there need be no last words.

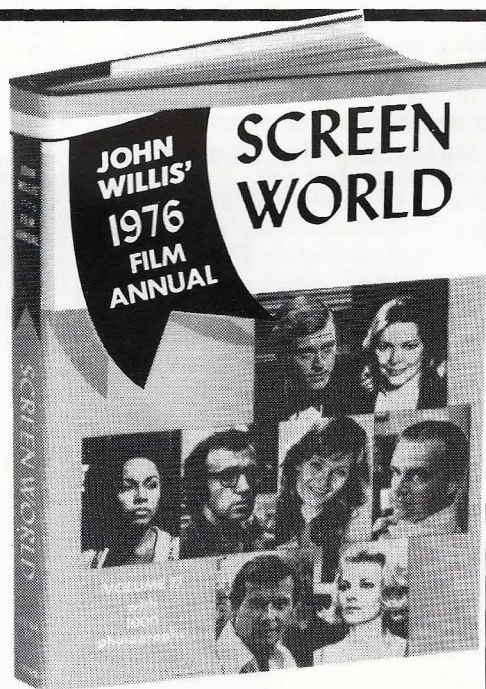
Whether there are second acts is another question.

Larry McMurtry is a contributing editor of *American Film*.

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